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THE NEW REPUBLIC

War Ain't What It Used to Be



The Editors: Where Did \$1.4 Trillion Go? • Morton Kondracke:
President • Fred Barnes: Weinberger
en: What Conventional War Would Be

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

ISSUE 3,770

WASHINGTON, D.C.

APRIL 20, 1987

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- 4 TRB FROM WASHINGTON LADIES' DAY
The Supreme Court's latest affirmative action ruling.
- 6 CORRESPONDENCE On Watergate, Schlesinger, David Byrne, &c.
- 7 THE EDITORS WHERE DID IT ALL GO?
In the past six years we've spent \$1.4 trillion on defense. What did it buy?
- NOTEBOOK
Reagan's trade salvo: Hiroshima or Pearl Harbor?
- 8 CHARLES PAUL FREUND THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST
- 9 MORTON KONDRACK SDI IN THE SKY
A Star Wars plan both parties can live with.
- 13 FRED BARNES WHITE HOUSE WATCH: CAP ON TOP
They still don't like him on the Hill. But among the Reaganites Weinberger is riding high.
- 15 ELIOT A. COHEN COMPUTER COMBAT
Nuclear war would be hellish, but with new technology the other kind could be just as bad.
- 17 ERIC ALTERMAN SCANDAL SHEET
Iranamok isn't all. Here's your handy reference guide to Reagan administration malfeasance.
- 20 HIRSH GOODMAN PRETORIA CONNECTION
Israel's marriage of desperation with South Africa.
- 21 CROCKER COULSON GEEZER SLEAZE
FDR's son and the reductio ad absurdum of interest-group politics.
- 24 UWE E. REINHARDT REAGANOMICS, R.I.P.
The president's own 1987 Economic Report confirms the failure of the theories that got him elected.
- 28 STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS: WHAT THE BIOGRAPHER SAW
The life of Joe Orton.
- 30 XAVIER ARGUELLO THE WRITER AS TOURIST
The Jaguar Smile by Salman Rushdie
- 34 DONALD DAVIE A DEMURRAL
The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, 1909-1939
- 39 THOMAS O. MELIA THE TRACKS OF TERROR
The American Connection: U.S. Guns, Money, and Influence in Northern Ireland by Jack Holland
- 40 CATHY STERN POEM Once Removed
- 42 IAN HACKING BUILDER AND STACKER
The Society of Mind by Marvin Minsky
- 45 DOROTHY WICKENDEN TRIVIAL PURSUITS
Persian Nights by Diane Johnson
- 47 ADAM PAUL WEISMAN THE WRITE STUFF
The Legacies of Literacy by Harvey J. Graff
Illiteracy: A National Dilemma by David Harman
- 50 WASHINGTON DIARIST BUREAUCRATS' LAMENT

COVER "Battle of Chattanooga," November 24-25, 1863, by Currier & Ives (The Granger Collection). Articles on pages 7, 9, 13, and 15.

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 196, Number 16, Issue 3,770, April 20, 1987. (Printed on April 1, 1987.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 5 & 12, July 13 & 20, Aug. 10 & 17, and Sept. 14 & 21, 1987) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, \$56; foreign, \$81; Canada, \$70. Back issues, \$2.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1987 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-525-0643.

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

LADIES' DAY

Twelve Santa Clara County employees applied for the job of road dispatcher in December 1979, of whom nine were deemed qualified. All were interviewed. Paul Johnson got a "score" of 75 on the interview and Diane Joyce got a 73. Five other applicants "scored" over 70. Nevertheless Joyce got the job because of the county's affirmative action plan, which the Supreme Court upheld last month.

Affirmative action opponents sometimes forget how crude the meritocratic processes are that they defend so passionately. How can you seriously "score"

a job interview on a scale of one to 100, so that a difference of two points means anything important? How accurately can an interview determine who is going to make the best road dispatcher? Why should current county employees get a lock on this opportunity when some outsider might also like to be a road dispatcher and might make a better one?

There is no real reason to suppose that Paul Johnson would have made a better road dispatcher than Diane Joyce, or than the other seven qualified applicants. This is quite common. In most situations like this, the need to make discriminations far exceeds the system's ability to make relevant ones. An economist might say that this shows supply and demand are out of whack. Lower the pay for road dispatchers until the number of qualified applicants equals the number of jobs available, and anyone who wants to be a road dispatcher can be one. There would be no need to make irrelevant distinctions—racial, sexual, or otherwise.

In fields such as law and medicine, I think that's a promising approach: reduce inequality, don't redistribute it. But bureaucratic selection processes will never be eliminated, and they will always be arbitrary. No woman had ever

been a road dispatcher in Santa Clara County before Diane Joyce. It's hard to feel any terrible injustice was done to Paul Johnson because he "scored" two points higher on his interview.

The *Johnson* case goes further than the Court has ever gone in holding that employers may institute voluntary affirmative action plans without any showing of past discrimination. In his icy dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia talks of the "willing suspension of disbelief that is currently a credential for reading our opinions in the affirmative action field." It's tempting to respond, in the words of the old Lone Ranger-and-Tonto joke: "What you mean 'our,' white man?" Scalia associates himself with decisions he had nothing to do with only for the purpose of sneering at them.

But Scalia has a point. Affirmative action rests on a variety of troubling fictions. The justices place great weight on the distinction between "rigid quotas" and a "flexible" approach. Santa Clara County's plan, they note approvingly, "expressly directed that numerous factors be taken into account." They love "factors." But filling a job is an all-or-nothing-at-all decision. You either get the job or you don't. If race and sex are permissible factors, they will sometimes be the determining factors, or the affirmative action is pointless. If race or sex is the determining factor, a white male has lost out as surely as if there had been a rigid quota.

The justices also require that affirmative action plans be "temporary." They observe that Santa Clara County's plan "expressed its objective as the attainment, rather than the maintenance, of a work force mirroring the labor force in the county"—a nice distinction. It's been two decades since affirmative action began, and more affirmative action administrators have gone to their reward than have ever declared victory and disbanded their plans.

The justices freely allow court-imposed racial quotas as a "remedy" for past discrimination. That is, you can be ordered to do something the same court would forbid you to do voluntarily. The traditional idea of judicial remedies is that the victim of injustice has a right to be made whole and the wrongdoer has no right to complain. But in this case the beneficiaries of court-imposed quotas are rarely the same people who suffered from this specific past discrimination, and the white males who lose out now were not

continued on page 49

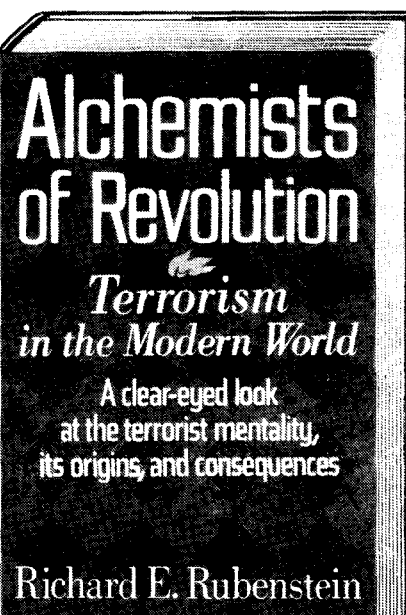
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CORRESPONDENCE

HE IS NOT A CROOK

To the editors:

Although Watergate and Iranamok ("This Is Watergate," March 16) may be historically comparable, there is a crucial moral distinction: at its core, Watergate was a failure of probity; Iranamok is a failure of competence. Watergate was base criminality carried out for purely political purposes. The motive in trading arms for hostages derived from Reagan's soft-heartedness about the hostages' families. This immensely popular, re-elected president sought no particular political advantage.

Regarding the use of money from the arms transfer to Iran for *contra* support, the question is whether the president knew of it and approved it. It is believable that Ronald Reagan was so disengaged or, as George Will says, "slothful," that he did not know. Robert McFarlane's testimony about the preparation of a "chronology of the operation" suggests that the president was an unwitting dupe of advisers' efforts to "protect" him from complicity.

This is the most profound difference between Reagan and Nixon. Can anyone seriously suggest that Nixon was an unwitting dupe in the Watergate cover-up?

It remains to be seen whether the competent crook or the honest bumbler has done more long-term harm. It is a sobering thought that, in terms of historical significance, an essentially honest man might be more inimical to this democracy than a dishonest one.

J. H. SHALE
San Diego, California

CAMELOT TEMPTATION

To the editors:

I couldn't resist skimming Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s latest polemical exercise, masquerading as analysis of the American presidency ("The Imperial Temptation," March 16), for any mention of the name Kennedy. Of course, I found none. Apparently we are to believe that the Kennedy administration, alone among postwar presidencies, remained free from the so-called imperial temptation. Schlesinger's

er's "Camelot blinders" remain securely in place. He will always be the Kennedy administration's chief apologist and court historian, but his analysis (or lack thereof) of that administration will never have any credibility.

LOWELL C. BROWN
Los Angeles, California

CONDOMS FOR KIDS

To the editors:

In "Clinical Examination" (March 16) Adam Paul Weisman refers to teenage pregnancy as part of a "health crisis," and implicitly equates distributing condoms to children with immunizing them against smallpox. In such talk we see the demystification and ultimately the trivialization of sex, an attitude widely assumed in this age of Dr. Ruth. Sex is merely physically significant, our culture seems to say; its spiritual and moral depth escapes us. No wonder teenagers often decide that it's all child's play. Now Weisman would have us spend money on "health" clinics. They may reduce the number of teenage pregnancies; they will also diminish our children's already shallow image of human sexuality.

KAY S. HYMOWITZ
Brooklyn, New York

To the editors:

Adam Paul Weisman quotes an adjunct professor of the Teachers College in New York as saying, "Schools are increasingly being pushed to be social service centers, and they don't do that well." Does no one remember that schools are, by definition, social service agencies? They were the first of many that were created for the public good. I agree with Weisman that schools do more than teach. Why can't we realize that we must deal with the present reality and strive to help these kids instead of looking back to a time (and I'm not even sure that time ever existed) when kids were "moral"?

DANIEL MCNEIL
Downers Grove, Illinois

To the editors:

Adam Paul Weisman did not emphasize perhaps the most important flaw in the conservative argument that distributing birth control is not a function of the

continued on page 49

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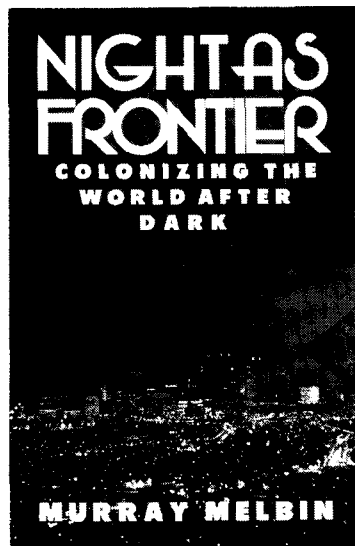
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 20, 1987

WHERE DID IT ALL GO?

In the six years since Ronald Reagan became president, the government has spent \$1.46 trillion on national defense. What did that money buy?

Without question, we got a tremendous amount of hardware. Since Reagan took office, the Army has bought thousands of new Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, and UH-60 and AH-64 helicopters. The Navy has grown from 479 deployable ships to nearly 600, including three new aircraft carriers. We should have a 600-ship Navy by 1990. In strategic forces, by the end of fiscal 1987 we will have deployed 27 new MX intercontinental ballistic missiles, each with ten warheads capable of destroying hardened targets in the Soviet Union—and more of them are on the way. We'll have nearly 60 B-1 bombers, an additional Trident submarine (the seventh member of a projected 16-ship fleet). And still to come: the D-5 missile, Stealth bombers, Midgetman single-warhead ballistic missiles, and, if the administration has its way, Star Wars—not to mention a new cargo plane, advanced cruise missiles, the LHX helicopter, and advanced fighter planes for both the Air Force and the Navy.

As even Jimmy Carter ultimately recognized, America needed to dedicate more to its defenses if it was to keep pace with the Soviets. Indeed, in the last five-year defense plan he submitted to Congress, Carter proposed a buildup only about \$200 billion smaller than the one we have experienced under Reagan. Nevertheless, it's not clear that the Reagan buildup has bought us a military establishment better able to fight and win a war.

The expensive new weapons don't all work the way they're supposed to. The DIVAD gun was such a clunker that the Pentagon had to cancel it. The Bradley fighting vehicle has been roundly criticized because it may be no more mobile—and actually more vulnerable—than the armored infantry vehicle the Army already has on hand. As for the B-1 bomber, in a recent report the House

Armed Services Committee says the plane can only successfully carry out about half of the wartime missions it was intended to. Thanks to glitches in the electronic systems that are supposed to render these giant aircraft less vulnerable to Soviet air defenses, the 100-plane B-1 fleet (price: \$28.3 billion) probably won't be fully operational until 1991—at the earliest. The Air Force wants an extra \$800 million this year just to fix defects and upgrade the bomber, but it still isn't sure how to accomplish all the necessary changes.

These big-ticket strategic systems are expensive to design and develop, too. At \$43.7 billion, research and development is the fastest growing item in the Pentagon budget. The boom has squeezed more mundane, but still vital, "readiness-related" accounts in the conventional budget. In recent hearings on Capitol Hill witness after witness told the same story: American conventional forces aren't really ready to fight. They still lag badly in ammunition, spare parts, logistics, and combat medical care. The administration's own 1988 budget requests would do no more than hold these areas steady. When Congress decides to cut, as it inevitably will, conventional readiness may be slighted to protect the strategic buildup.

The Reagan administration has also failed to achieve a permanent shift in the American people's notoriously fickle thinking about national defense. In 1980, the year of hostages in Iran and Soviets in Afghanistan, 78 percent of Americans favored a bigger defense budget. But a *Time* poll shows that the pro-defense mood that helped carry Ronald Reagan to victory has evaporated. Only 31 percent now believe that the country needs to spend more on national defense. By huge majorities, the public would prefer to boost spending on health care, housing, and the environment. The Reagan buildup is a victim of both its successes and its failures. Americans believe that we have done enough to rearm and, thanks largely to boondoggles like

DIVAD, that much of what we spent was wasted.

This is one area in which Congress has reflected the public mood. In real terms, total defense spending has increased over 45 percent since Reagan took office, but over half of that growth occurred in his first two years in office. In the last two years, as the public's pro-defense mood has waned and both the deficit and sacrosanct middle-class entitlements have grown, Congress has actually imposed real *cuts* in Pentagon budget authority. Even if Congress accepts Reagan administration plans through 1992, we would be devoting six percent of GNP to defense—only seven-tenths of a percent more than in Jimmy Carter's last year.

The Pentagon needs to eliminate as much waste as possible. But there is a point at which it does more harm than good to look at the defense budget through a cost-benefit lens. We repeat: America needed to rearm, and needs to

continue spending what it takes to sustain a commitment to stronger defense. The reasons are basically moral. This country has special responsibilities not only to defend itself, but also to protect allies around the world against Soviet expansion. Even arms control won't relieve us of this responsibility, or make it cheaper to fulfill. Indeed, some kinds of nuclear arms control agreements could actually impose upon us a requirement to beef up conventional defense.

The binge-purge defense pattern under Reagan reflects not only the inherent fickleness of Congress and the public, but also the administration's undue haste in trying to capitalize on the pro-defense mood of the early 1980s. In his pitch for higher spending, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger focused on the broadest (some would say the crudest) measures of our defense commitment—the percent of GNP and share of the total federal budget we

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week	Last Week	Weeks on Chart		
1. LET US PREY ✓	3	2		
<i>Televangelism.</i> Swaggart's OK, Roberts is OK, Falwell looks good, and the Bakkers still enjoy supporters' sympathy. The only reason Pat Robertson's wounded is that he sought to transcend the fundamentalist subculture. Since he wasn't going to do that anyway, what's all the noise about? It's about the mainstream's pleasure in laughing at fundamentalism.				
2. UP TO SPEED? ✓	—	1		
<i>Rebuilding Reagan.</i> The highway bill veto fight is only the first phase of the effort to bring Reagan back. The Reagan show has gone to a supportive heartland, and he is even seeking out the press. His personal popularity has survived; the problem is keeping the credit for White House efficacy from landing in Howard Baker's lap.				
3. BLOCK OFF THE OLD CHIP ✓	*	6		
<i>Competitiveness.</i> Trade retaliation against Japan pleased populists, who thought it was about time. Americans' feelings are hurt by Japan's market success, even though they keep buying Japanese products and telling themselves it would be OK if the Japanese reciprocated. But Wall Street's shudders and the dollar's plummet may well short-circuit the current game of chicken.				
4. SEMPER SPY ✓	—	1		
<i>Embassy spies.</i> Is nothing sacred? Now the Marine guards at the Moscow embassy are allegedly cooperating with the Russians. Actually, given the large number of spy cases in the last year, the popular reaction's been quite restrained. Certainly it's not hurting Gorbachev. For now even this case seems to be living off its titillation value.				
5. WOMEN'S WORK ✓	—	1		
<i>Affirmative action.</i> Even Americans surprised by the Supreme Court's affirmative action decision didn't care very much; and the few angry outbursts seemed pro forma. The decision may in fact be social engineering, but Americans are now willing to go along with that. Credit the civil rights movement; it achieved a genuine social revolution.				
6. GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED ✓	4	6		
<i>1988.</i> There are now nearly 20 known or presumed candidates for president, more than enough to justify the early "consumers' guides" to candidates that are already appearing. What's impressive is how wide-open the race seems, now that the "Reagan clone" approach, last year's surefire style, has gone out the window.				
7. SOFT-PEDALING ✓	—	1		
<i>Gas.</i> Is that the energy crisis down the road again? Low prices, increased auto efficiency, and years of White House indifference have conspired to lull everybody to sleep on this issue. But warnings have continued, including the prediction that prices will double by the 1990s. Even the administration is making noises again, though it has succeeded in undoing the energy work of three presidents.				
8. BLACK & WHITE TV ✓	—	1		
<i>Television.</i> The black audience, concentrated in big cities, is becoming increasingly important to network TV as whites are drawn to cable. Many shows with marginal ratings already owe their survival to black viewers. This doesn't mean an all-Cosby schedule, but program planners are taking black appeal into account when working up shows.				
9. MAN AND BEASTIE ✓	—	1		
<i>Rock 'n' roll.</i> A furor is following the Beastie Boys, a rock group, on their current tour. Somebody told mom and dad about the 21-foot penis on stage, and if it wasn't the group's manager, it should have been. Parental disapproval, generation upon generation, is rock's bonanza, and it's been missing from mainstream groups for a while now. Of course, the disapproval stakes have risen; all Elvis had to do was shake provocatively.				
10. THAT CERTAIN SMILE ✓	—	1		
<i>Celebrity.</i> Remember "cover-girl" models and their anonymous male counterparts? Well, forget 'em. They don't sell magazines the way celebrities do. Everybody from <i>GQ</i> to <i>Good Housekeeping</i> is sticking the rich and famous up front now, and ad sales and newsstand sales are climbing as a result. One possible downside: quicker celebrity burnout, meaning we'll have to run through even more of these people.				

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

devote to the military as compared with the Soviets.

But a wish list is no substitute for a strategy. And Weinberger hasn't shown, except in the most general terms, how the weapons systems he wants fit into an overall plan to use force to defend American interests. His famous speech outlining six conditions under which America would go to war read more like six conditions under which America would never fight. He's quietly backed away from that early effort to define a strategy. Meanwhile, we continue to pursue sometimes contradictory objectives, such as building both the MX missile and the strategically redundant Midgetman. There won't be a working consensus for a consistent defense commitment until such basic questions are resolved.

Nor will we enjoy a consensus until national leaders enlist the public directly, and candidly, in the defense effort. Reagan told Americans they could have a strong defense without paying for it in higher taxes. He and Weinberger may complain that Congress is using the deficit as an excuse for cutting defense, but that excuse never would have existed if the administration had leveled with the public about the true costs of its buildup.

It's time we stopped pretending that any amount of spending and technology can substitute for a strong public spirit of involvement in this country's defense. No merely budgetary step would bolster that as much as reinstating a draft—with no deferments, and no exceptions other than medical ones. Under the current all-volunteer system, most of the young men and women who serve in the armed forces do so at least partly because they can't find a job anywhere else. Middle- and upper-class youth, meanwhile, look upon national defense as something that doesn't concern them, except as taxpayers. We're not advocating some kind of long, twilight struggle. But it isn't healthy when the citizens of a democracy view defense and military service in abstract terms. Why is the military spending issue so susceptible to demagoguery? One reason may well be that such a relatively small segment of the public bases its judgments on personal experience in soldiering.

A return to the draft would put us on the same footing as our NATO allies, almost all of whom employ some form of mandatory military service. That would enhance our moral claim for a greater defense spending commitment from them. But most important, it would lay to rest the notion that the defense of freedom is something Americans can have on the cheap.

NOTEBOOK

□ THE NEW REPUBLIC has been losing money for its entire 73-year history (though we hope that's about to change). Another way of saying the same thing is that we sell each copy for less than it costs us to produce and market it. Even among profitable publications, it is standard practice in our industry to sell introductory subscriptions

at a loss, in the hope of attracting long-term customers. In the argot of international trade, then, the entire magazine industry is engaged in "dumping": the allegedly nefarious practice of selling a product for less than cost. This is the charge against the Japanese microchip industry that led President Reagan to impose duties that could double the price of some Japanese consumer goods in America. The actual charge isn't even "dumping" per se. It's violation of an agreement Japan and the United States signed last fall, divvying up the microchip market irrespective of price competition, legitimate or otherwise. In short, the Japanese aren't accused of cheating on free trade. They're accused of cheating on a cartel. The chip agreement was already hurting U.S. manufacturers of products using chips, and driving those jobs abroad. Reagan's effort to enforce the agreement will hurt U.S. consumers, and American farmers are worried that the Japanese will retaliate against our farm products. Why shouldn't they? After all, American farm goods are heavily subsidized by the government and "dumped" on world markets for less than the cost of production. Wall Street, meanwhile, is scared half to death that all this will lead to a devastating trade war. And rightly so. This way madness lies.

□ THE INSCRUTABLE EAST:

Chinese leader vows to pursue liberalization

—*Boston Globe*, March 26

Chinese Premier, in Major Speech, Adopts Hard Line

—*New York Times*, same day

Settling for A Stalemate

For now, party leaders choose a middle road

—*Time*, April 6

But will it fly?

SDI IN THE SKY

ON MARCH 23 some of the nation's most fervent supporters of strategic defense dined amid orchestra music at Washington's Mayflower Hotel to observe the fourth anniversary of the speech in which President Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative. One might have expected it to be a happy commemoration, in view of the money and momentum that the president's speech put behind what had been a backwater area of defense research. Instead, it was an occasion for bitterness, expressed most harshly by conservative Republican Senator Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming:

March 23 . . . is not our anniversary. It is the day that the drive for anti-missile defense was hijacked by the Reagan administration's incompetent and unfaithful crew. These fretful geniuses took the building and deployment of anti-missile weapons off the nation's agenda. They defined the job so that it could not be done. They mixed strategic defense, which was supposed to be the cure for the ravages of arms control, with the arms control process itself. They gave the cure a massive dose of the disease. Thus, they managed to turn an inherently popular idea . . . into something ridiculous.

Those attending the dinner, sponsored by the pioneer pro-SDI group High Frontier, were reacting most immediately to an administration decision (announced in separate broadcast interviews by Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger on February 8) that it would not be possible to decide during the Reagan presidency whether to deploy an anti-missile system.

They were especially disappointed with Weinberger, who had said on January 22 that "today we may be nearing the day when decisions about deployment of the first phase can be made," leading members of the early-deployment lobby to think he had joined them. Weinberger aides say they misinterpreted him, and point to another part of the same speech in which he said, "Some would have us deploy so-called off-the-shelf technologies now. This we reject because, I am sorry to say, there are no technologies on the shelf that can do the job we want and need."

WALLOP AND HIS allies, including Republican Representatives Jack Kemp and James Courter and Democratic Senator Ernest Hollings, think technology does exist for a crash start on three separate SDI programs: a space-based "kinetic-kill" bullet system to destroy Soviet missiles in the "boost phase," shortly after lift-off; a ground-based ERIS rocket that would hit Soviet warheads in "midcourse," that is, in space; and a ground-based terminal defense that would hit the warheads as they fell through the atmosphere toward their targets. Scientists supporting them assert that deployment could begin in 1994, and that the full system would cost \$120 billion. Scientists who are skeptical about SDI, including Democratic former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, say the real cost would be five to ten times that amount, and that it's ridiculous to think that such new systems would be ready for deployment in seven years—the time it takes to build an aircraft carrier.

The early-deployment lobby also is convinced that it's vital for President Reagan, who believes in SDI, to make the deployment decision, lest it be delayed and perhaps abandoned in the next administration. Having failed to convince Reagan and Company, the SDI hawks are determined to act politically. Kemp will try to make early deployment the litmus test for 1988 Republican presidential candidates. At the same time, opposition to Star Wars probably will become the party-line position among Democrats. Then SDI is likely to become one of the epic issues

of the November campaign—along with taxes, trade, and the *contras*.

That will be unfortunate, because if any decision needs to be made in a cool bipartisan climate, it's this one, which involves spending hundreds of billions of dollars, making complicated evaluations of high technology, determining our relations with the Soviets and allies, and extending the militarization of space. But politicization and polarization of the decision probably are inevitable because there is no consensus in the country—and sometimes not even in the Reagan administration or among people who "favor" SDI—on what fundamental U.S. nuclear strategy should be, what systems might work and what they might cost, and where U.S.-Soviet arms control agreements might fit into the picture.

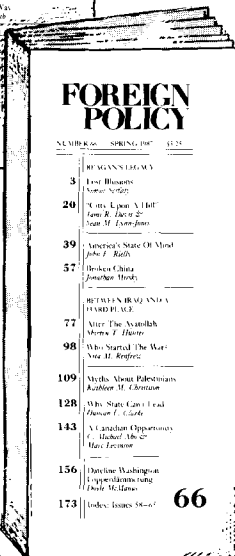
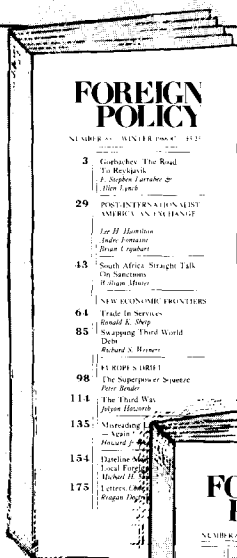
CLEAR THINKING can begin, though, with the abandonment of President Reagan's initial vision of a foolproof, "umbrella" defense of the U.S. population. Except for Reagan himself, no one on any side of the SDI debate takes such a system seriously except as a mid-21st-century dream. Those who are most enthusiastic about SDI, including the Wallop-Courter school, Pentagon SDI program managers, and Weinberger, now argue that SDI could so complicate a Soviet planner's calculations of how to launch an attack on U.S. military targets that he would never launch at all, thereby ensuring safety to the U.S. population. In this theoretical sense, ballistic missiles might be rendered "impotent and obsolete," but virtually all SDI theorists are talking about an enhancement of nuclear deterrence, not the end of it.

It's also important to realize that laser beams and directed-energy weapons are not being considered anymore as first-generation SDI programs. Rather, current debate is over less futuristic technology, and not so much about the question, "Can it work?" as, "At what cost?" and, "How easily can the Soviets overcome it?" Kinetic-kill vehicles are based on 1960s concepts. Skeptics think the Soviets can counter the system by building fast-burn missiles that would rise quickly through the boost phase, but SDI proponents say the cost of refitting Soviet missiles with new engines would be enormous. Midcourse intercept systems do have a serious technical problem, according to Pentagon scientists: sensors are unable to distinguish real Soviet warheads from decoys. Everyone agrees that terminal-phase defenses are easy to build; in fact, the Soviets already have one operational ABM system around Moscow and apparently are upgrading their vast air-defense system to have anti-missile capability.

Another aid to clear thinking is an acknowledgment of the threat the United States faces. This is best laid out by Jimmy Carter's former national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in two recent books, *Game Plan* and *Promise or Peril*. At current deployment rates, Brzezinski argues, by the mid-1990s the Soviet will have between 8,000 and 10,500 high-accuracy first-strike warheads capable of destroying the U.S. land-based missile force and

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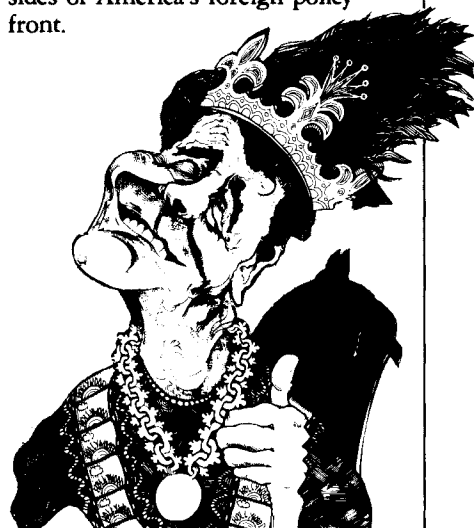
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other top military targets three times over. The United States will have only 3,400 first-strike warheads to aim at 6,000 to 7,000 top-priority Soviet targets. A wide spectrum of U.S. nuclear experts agrees that the frequently disparaged "window of vulnerability" for the United States will open again in the 1990s unless something is done about it.

As Brzezinski and many others point out, there are three things to do about the problem, alone or in combination: reach an arms control agreement with the Soviets that lessens the danger, build up U.S. offensive strength to counter the threat, or deploy strategic defenses. SDI hawks tend to favor options two and three, believing arms control to be a ruse. The Reagan administration has been trying to pursue all three options, with the State and Defense departments in conflict over which to emphasize. Some moderate Democrats favor arms control, plus less vulnerable offensive systems such as mobile MX missiles, and vigorous research on defense, but not deployment. Liberal Democrats tend to put their hopes heavily on arms control; right now they also favor the single-warhead Midgetman missile and limited defense research.

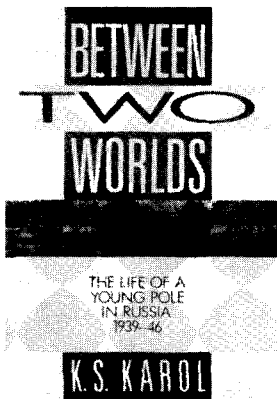
Even though it has decided not to decide whether to deploy SDI, the Reagan administration still hopes to settle America's strategic future before it leaves office. The State Department wants to do it through arms control, winning a major stand-down in the Soviet offensive threat in return

for postponement of SDI deployment. The Defense Department wants to test a space-based kinetic-kill system early next year, showing that it's possible to hit a missile in the boost phase and thereby give SDI a hefty political shove toward eventual deployment. Would President Reagan agree to delay SDI in return for a deep cut in Soviet missile strength? At Reykjavik he wouldn't, but now his negotiators are seeking realistic Soviet cuts, not the utopian do-away-with-missiles ideas he tossed around with Gorbachev.

To advance their aims, both State and Defense favor the so-called "broad" interpretation of the 1972 ABM Treaty that the administration claims would allow space testing. The Pentagon actually wants to test; State wants the possibility of such tests to use as a bargaining lever with the Russians in Geneva. The administration seems fatally stymied, though, by Democratic Senator Sam Nunn, who has challenged the validity of the broad interpretation, insisting that when the Senate ratified the ABM Treaty, it understood that only fixed-based ABM systems could be tested, not mobile or space systems. Administration arms expert Paul Nitze, who helped negotiate the 1972 treaty, says that the United States tried to get the Soviets to agree to a tight ban on such systems, but failed, and that the secret negotiating record shows it. Nunn, who has examined the record, says that it's ambiguous.

The chances are that Democrats in Congress will insist that the administration abide by the narrow interpreta-

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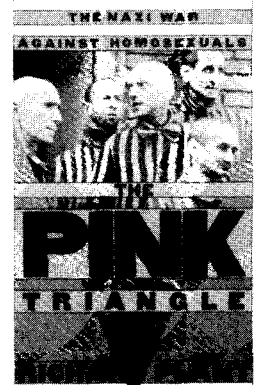
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tion. That will force the administration to face the decision of whether to conduct less dramatic and conclusive tests, or abrogate the ABM Treaty to go ahead with a shoot-down from space. State likely will oppose the latter course, fearing it would upset the allies, give the Soviets an excuse to hang tough in the Geneva talks and expand their own SDI program, and cause Congress to cut SDI research money. Some Pentagon officials sound as though they will favor dumping the treaty, using Soviet ABM violations as justification. The president did abandon the unratified SALT II treaty, but the Democratic Congress is moving to enforce it by law and appropriations; it's even more likely to tie the administration's hands on ABM, which was ratified and is deemed by many Democrats to be arms control's crowning achievement.

ALL THIS suggests that the administration will lose its bargaining leverage in Geneva. The chance for an arms control deal in this administration then will lie with the Soviets' eagerness to lock in SDI limitations under Reagan. On the other hand, they may calculate that waiting into the next presidency will delay SDI even longer and allow them to keep working on their first-strike program as well. In any event, time is getting short for an agreement to be reached, signed, and ratified by the Senate. The chances are that the Reagan administration will get an INF agreement, but will have to leave the strategic future to be decided after the 1988 election.

Sam Nunn, for one, thinks that the 1988 campaign will be "the worst kind of place to debate this," and recalls the past cases when weapons systems became partisan issues. The debate over the B-1 bomber in 1976 and 1980 resulted in a premature decision by Jimmy Carter to abandon it and a mistaken decision by Reagan to revive it. Bickering over the basing mode of the MX missile in 1980 led Reagan to bar an invulnerable mobile system and Congress to limit funding to 50 missiles instead of Carter's proposed 200. "If SDI becomes the campaign issue of 1988," said Nunn, "it will be bad for the country."

He's right, but it looks inevitable unless someone steps forward to suggest a bipartisan way out. Brzezinski has a proposal that deserves attention. Under a system he calls "Mutual Strategic Security," he would unilaterally limit U.S. offensive warheads to fewer than would be needed for a first-strike attack on Soviet land-based missiles. Then he would protect the U.S. missile force with a porous, two-tiered SDI system—the space-based kinetic-kill system and ground-based terminal defense. He favors making the decision now to deploy the system, believing it will prod the Soviets into concessions on arms control that might either obviate the need for SDI deployment or stimulate renegotiation of the ABM Treaty to allow both sides to deploy defenses. He thinks a thin SDI system would cost about \$70 billion, "in the ballpark with" the Democrats' proposed rail-mobile MX and Midgetman.

There would be no cause, says Brzezinski, for the Soviets to respond to the U.S. system by building up their offense,

since the United States would have publicly deprived itself of its ability to threaten the Soviet deterrent. A Soviet buildup would be evidence of intent on its side to maintain a first-strike threat against the United States.

Brzezinski's proposal has elements that should appeal to both parties. It's an early-deployment strategic defense for the Republicans and a no-first-strike system for Democrats. Legitimate questions need to be asked about whether it is cheaper than alternative systems, and whether it would work. But it is time for the United States to make strategic decisions that stick. The Carter administration left office with an arms control agreement, SALT II, that it could not sell to the Senate. It also recommended a new missile system, the MX, that got only partially built. This administration may not achieve a strategic arms agreement or reach any conclusive decisions on new weapons or SDI. Regardless of who wins the election, it's possible that fighting will continue into the next administration, with Democrats arguing for mobile missiles and arms control and the Republicans for first-strike missiles and SDI. While the United States fails to make up its mind, the Soviets continue building both offenses and defenses.

MORTON KONDRACK

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

CAP ON TOP

TOUGHER HITS have been delivered than the one the Tower Board fired at Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. But you'd never have guessed it from Weinberger's wild-eyed reaction. The report simply said that Weinberger and Secretary of State George Shultz, after opposing the arms sale to Iran, had "distanced themselves from the program" and "were not energetic in attempting to protect the president from the consequences of his personal commitment to freeing the hostages." The bottom line was that Weinberger and Shultz were guilty of sins of omission, but no more.

Shultz could live with that. Weinberger couldn't. He wanted vindication. And in a public display of raw clout, Weinberger got President Reagan to supply it. Reagan spurned the advice of senior White House aides, including chief of staff Howard Baker and national security adviser Frank Carlucci, and eulogized Weinberger and Shultz ("they were right and I was wrong") in his Saturday radio address on March 14. Eleven days earlier, in his nationally televised speech on Iranamok, Reagan had said he fully accepted the findings in the Tower report. Weinberger persuaded him to contradict that statement in the radio talk. No one else in the administration could have pulled this off, which gives you an idea of Weinberger's standing at the White House. After six-plus years in the Pentagon,

he is more influential than ever. At least with the one person who counts.

If Weinberger lasts until next March, he will become the longest serving defense secretary of all time. Chances are, he'll never be regarded as the finest. He hasn't made revolutionary changes in military decision-making, which is Robert McNamara's claim to fame as defense secretary from 1961 to 1968. Nor has he altered strategic doctrine in the fashion of James Schlesinger, Pentagon chief from 1973 to 1975. As enthusiastic as he is in promoting Star Wars, Weinberger was not responsible for Reagan's decision to embrace strategic defense. In fact, a Weinberger aide desperately tried to convince the White House not to mention Star Wars at all in the president's March 1983 speech on defense. That address is now remembered for having kicked off the Star Wars program.

Despite Weinberger's skill as a fundraiser, he isn't likely to get much credit for boosting defense spending either. True, spending skyrocketed in the early Reagan years—up 12.7 percent in 1981, 11.8 percent in 1982, eight percent in 1983, 4.8 percent in 1984, 7.2 percent in 1985. But Weinberger merely caught a wave. Public support for a military buildup rose in the late 1970s and continued into the 1980s. Any defense secretary under Reagan probably would have gotten as much. The true test is what happened once the wave was spent. Weinberger pushed for more spending, and failed miserably. Pentagon spending fell, in real dollars, 4.1 percent in 1986 and 2.6 percent this year. For 1988 Weinberger is seeking a three percent rise. At best he'll get zero growth, at worst military spending may dip another two or three percent.

Weinberger's forte is stubbornness. He is relentless in pressing his case. This hasn't won him any friends in Congress, where he has fewer allies than any defense secretary in memory. "He's not a let's-make-a-deal guy," says a Pentagon official. Every year, members of Congress plead with him to tell them which defense programs should be given priority over others. Weinberger always refuses, insisting

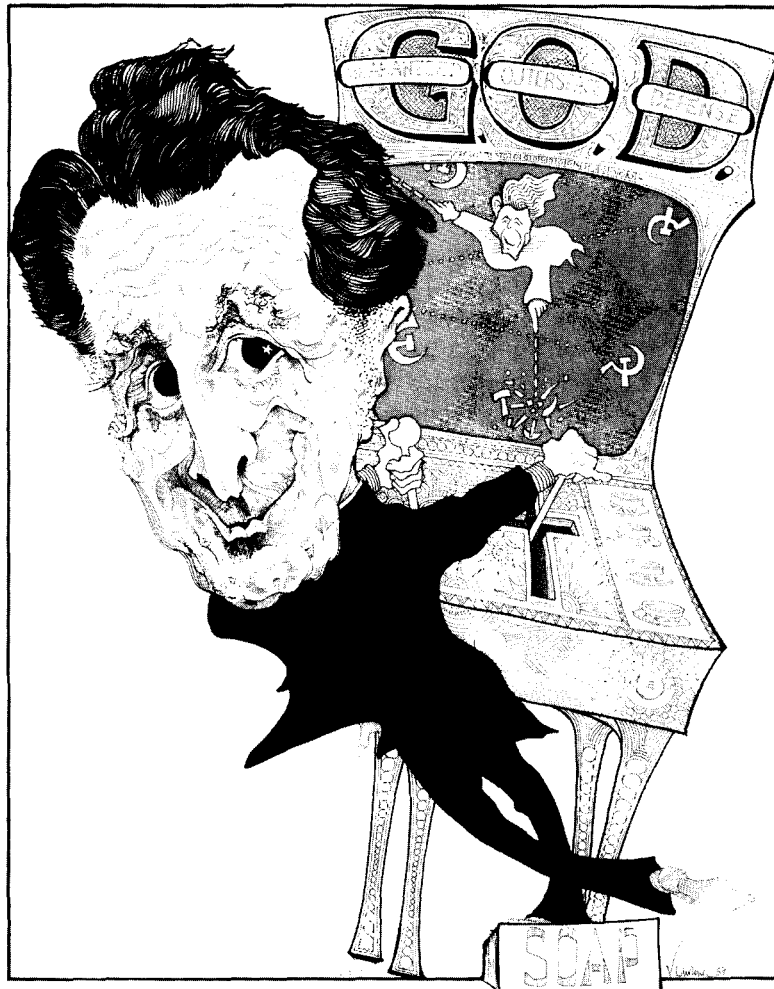
every program is critical. "He regards being inflexible on defense as a virtue," the official says. "He won't offer programs to be cut." Last year the House Armed Services Committee never got around to hearing testimony from Weinberger. After two scheduled sessions were canceled, Republicans on the committee told Chairman Les Aspin not to bother summoning him. They knew what he'd say.

In January Weinberger infuriated Democratic Senator Carl Levin, a persistent critic, when he refused to concede that he'd changed plans by requesting money in the 1988 budget for two new aircraft carriers. At a Senate

Armed Services Committee hearing, Levin quoted to Weinberger from last year's Defense Department annual report to Congress: "The Navy will have to order replacements for some of its carriers in the early 1990s if it is to sustain a force of 15 into the next century." Levin also noted that the five-year shipbuilding plan that the Pentagon published in 1986 mentioned no new carriers. Still, Weinberger stood his ground. "There has been no change," he said. George Wilson of the *Washington Post* referred this as "quintessential Caspar W. Weinberger."

If this style loses friends in Congress, it works famously inside the administration. Weinberger has won virtually every argument. In Reagan's first

term, Weinberger often encountered hostility from White House aides, especially budget director David Stockman, chief of staff James Baker, and Baker's deputy, Richard Darman. In Stockman's book, *The Triumph of Politics*, he groused that Weinberger was devious in budget deliberations. Once he used cartoon blowups, Stockman wrote, to depict versions of the defense budget. The budget as projected by Jimmy Carter was a pygmy with no rifle. The budget favored by Stockman was "a four-eyed wimp who looked like Woody Allen, carrying a tiny rifle." The Weinberger budget was, Stockman said, "GI Joe himself, 190 pounds of fighting man, all decked out in helmet and flak jacket and pointing an M-60 machine gun." Reagan went with GI Joe.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In arms control disputes between Weinberger and Shultz, Reagan invariably sides with Weinberger. Shultz wants to use Star Wars as a bargaining chip. Weinberger got Reagan to bar that. Shultz strongly urged the president not to abandon the SALT II treaty. On Weinberger's advice, Reagan did just that. Shultz was leery of adopting a broad interpretation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Weinberger wants a broad interpretation to move ahead with field testing of Star Wars, and he prevailed on that, too. One reason for Weinberger's success, senior officials say, is that his method of arguing appeals to Reagan more than Shultz's. Shultz is often abstract and uses big words. Weinberger makes a simple pitch, repeats it several times, and when challenged, repeats it again. "With Cap, all you need is to take notes one-third of the time," says an official, a Weinberger ally. "The rest is just driving the truck back up again and again. I'd get tired of the rhetorical jackhammering, but it's clear Reagan is going to remember that night what Weinberger said, and won't have the foggiest what Shultz said."

REAGAN'S STRONG pro-defense bias makes Weinberger's sell in White House meetings all the easier. The president is instinctively inclined to spend more for defense and proceed briskly on Star Wars. When the National Security Planning Group gathered in late 1985 to take up the interpretation of the ABM Treaty, Shultz momentarily had the upper hand. He reminded the president that the man in charge of the Star Wars program, Gen. James Abrahamson, had told the group two months before that tests of Star Wars' effectiveness could be done under the strict interpretation. Weinberger responded that the tests could be done more conclusively, easily, and cheaply under the broad interpretation. At the end of the meeting, Reagan didn't announce a decision. "But when he walked out, you knew," says an official. Weinberger had won again.

Iranamok sealed Weinberger's advantage. At the White House aides still talk disparagingly of Shultz's efforts to separate himself from the scandal and his decision to let John Whitehead, the deputy secretary of state, testify on Capitol Hill. Whitehead disputed Reagan on several points. So Shultz is down, which means Weinberger is up. "He is lead-pipe tight with the president," says a senior White House official. And he has friends on the president's staff. Weinberger lobbied aggressively to install Carlucci, his former deputy in the defense department, as national security adviser. Carlucci's deputy is Gen. Colin Powell, who was an assistant to Weinberger at the Pentagon. Weinberger also won points for his speech to the National Press Club in January in which he said Iranamok should not be allowed to blot out the great successes of Reagan's presidency. The White House distributed copies of the speech, and Nancy Reagan told friends how much she liked it.

Given his reputation at the White House, Weinberger didn't hesitate to counter the Tower report. At his urging, a passage exonerating Weinberger and Shultz was included

in the text of Reagan's March 4 speech. The passage had Reagan expressing admiration for them and regret that he hadn't followed their advice on selling arms to Iran. A few hours before he gave the speech, Reagan called Weinberger and told him the passage had to be excised. The president promised that he'd get the word out later about his feelings. He didn't. On March 6 spokesman Marlin Fitzwater was asked if Reagan accepted the Tower report or agreed with Weinberger's and Shultz's rejection of the part zinging them. "The president accepts the report," said Fitzwater.

Weinberger was fit to be tied. Soon he was on the phone to the White House, talking to Colin Powell and Howard Baker and the president. On March 14 Weinberger and Shultz appeared in the Roosevelt Room to go over the language Reagan would employ in vindicating them. Shultz indicated he wasn't all that keen on the whole thing, but Weinberger didn't waver. The Tower report said they'd failed to speak up once Reagan had turned down their advice. In his radio talk March 14, the president said they had "never hesitated to give me their unvarnished views. . . . They're men willing to speak up, regardless of the strength of the opposition or the natural bureaucratic tendency to compromise or go along. And that's why I consider them so valuable." Weinberger was satisfied.

FRED BARNES

Almost as hellish as the nuclear kind.

COMPUTER COMBAT

IF THE United States and the Soviet Union strike an arms control deal to reduce nuclear weapons in Europe, one result may be that conventional forces will loom larger (even if only in psychological terms) in the West's strategies for defense and deterrence. Even before the possibility of a breakthrough in arms control emerged, however, a variety of forces—including changes in Soviet military thinking—had been stirring renewed interest in conventional weapons and tactics within Western defense establishments.

In recent years conventional warfare has taken on a new look. In fact, we are undergoing a technological revolution in conventional warfare. This will not make war more or less bloody. Nor will it automatically give the United States or anyone else an overwhelming advantage if war should occur. It will, however, change the character of battles and military balances, place new demands on military organizations, and present American security planners with both potential advantages and potential perils. Just as the computer has transformed the civilian economy, it has caused radical changes in the conduct of war as well. A host of other innovations, in everything from airframe materi-

als to lasers, have contributed, too. Consider just three recent trends in military hardware.

Long-range, unmanned, precision weapons. For as long as there have been fifth columnists and saboteurs, nations have been trying to find ways to sneak up on their enemies from behind. In more recent times, manned aircraft enabled armed forces to achieve the same end in a different way, although precision—the ability to select and strike an important target while leaving everything around it untouched—has always been, and remains, difficult to achieve.

Today, however, preprogrammed cruise missiles and tactical ballistic missiles are often as accurate as manned airplanes. This development has been a long time coming: the German World War II V-1 was a cruise missile and the V-2 a ballistic missile, yet neither was accurate enough to serve as more than a crude instrument to inspire civilian terror. Moreover, the development of new conventional explosives may enable both kinds of missile to do far more damage than was previously possible with relatively small payloads. Indeed, shortly they will be able to do almost as much damage as a manned fighter-bomber. It is now within the realm of possibility for a flight of conventionally armed medium-range ballistic missiles or cruise missiles to knock out air bases, command posts, even bridges from distances of several hundred miles. And, as these weapons become smarter—through the use of computers that enable them to recognize enemy airplanes, tanks, or whatever—they will be able to select and zero in on their own targets. Nor will they have to do their dirty work right away: “smart,” remotely planted minefields, for example, are a technical possibility.

Stealth. Since World War II, radar has been the chief means of spotting enemy ships and aircraft. Great ingenuity has been dedicated to devising ways to jam or destroy radar. Less thought was given to hiding from it. Now, however, we can design airplanes that are very difficult for radar to detect. Such “stealthy” aircraft use a variety of technical tricks. Some are exotic, such as non-reflective paints and structural materials. Some are simple, such as designing aircraft with rounded, not straight, edges, which makes them less visible to enemy radar. An American “Stealth” bomber is already on the way.

The implications of rendering radar largely irrelevant are enormous. Huge investments were made in 1970s- and early 1980s-era anti-aircraft systems that may become obsolete far sooner than had been expected. Targets that had once been thought safe from air attack, or not worth an enemy air force’s trouble, may become vulnerable.

Centralized, instantaneous intelligence. Today’s satellites can see more (using a variety of sensors) and are better at transmitting information back to earth. Drones carrying cameras and other sensor devices now allow commanders to take a leisurely look at enemy positions. Meanwhile, the arts of direction-finding, code-cracking, and many forms of electronic and signal intelligence have improved steadily since World War II (although fiber-optic or laser data transmission technology may counter some of these trends).

This now means that authorities in Washington or Moscow may be able—literally—to see as much as their commanders on the battlefield. Because of the way certain intelligence systems, particularly satellites, work, central authorities may well be able to get certain kinds of information even *before* their field commanders do. To some extent, this was already true in World War II. The British cracked many German ciphers, giving analysts in a converted country home outside London more information about the battleship Bismarck or Rommel’s supply convoys than field commanders had. Today those trends have taken us much further, and will go further yet.

Inevitably, and despite the lip service paid to the idea of delegating authority, of trusting the “man on the spot,” this will lead political authorities to try to fine-tune the use of violence. Deceived, perhaps, by the immediacy of television pictures, emboldened by their access to signal intelligence not available to harried officers in the field, they will engage in more and more backseat driving. Nor will this trend affect statesmen alone. Senior military officers will meddle more and more in decision-making by local commanders. According to Col. Charlie Beckwith’s memoir of the 1980 Iran rescue mission, interference in his on-the-spot decision to scrub the operation came not from the White House but from a major general supervising the operation from several thousand miles away.

ALL THREE transformations pose potential threats to U.S. security. For example, conventionally armed Soviet short- and medium-range ballistic missile forces (which the Russians have been building up lately) could pin down our air bases in Europe during an attack. That would negate the West’s clear advantage in sophisticated aircraft.

If properly managed, however, these changes in conventional warfare could work to our advantage. Unmanned systems may enable us to strike at a Qaddafi without worrying about captured pilots being tortured, or paraded through Middle Eastern capitals. The advent of radar-proof stealth aircraft could force the Soviets to spend more on air defenses—and less on other kinds of hardware that might threaten the balance of forces in Europe. Overall, revolutions in technology should favor the United States, because we are a more technically literate society, with a stronger technological base than the Soviets have.

But one thing these technological revolutions cannot do is automatically reduce the price in dollars of preparing for war, or the cost in blood should war occur. Nor do they offer magic keys to security: sooner or later our opponents will develop counterparts and antidotes to any military innovation on our part. That is why we can’t simply ignore change. Our security and that of our allies depends on our ability to set the course of technological competition in conventional military hardware.

Such a sustained commitment requires public support, which has been weakened recently by highly publicized (and often simplistic) allegations of waste in military pro-

curement. Ironically, public skepticism—and that of many military reformers as well—about “gold-plated” technology often goes hand in hand with a naive faith in seemingly simple technical solutions to difficult problems. A good example of this occurred in 1973, following the Yom Kippur War, when journalists and some military analysts declared that new, relatively cheap wire-guided anti-tank missiles had rendered costly tanks obsolete. Some concluded that this would make the defense of NATO affordable and simple: arm every German with a portable guided anti-tank missile, and invading Soviet tank divisions would perish long before they reached Frankfurt. But improvements in armor and doctrine quickly made up for some of the anti-tank missile’s initial advantages, as Israeli and Syrian tanks proved in Lebanon in 1982.

WE ALSO HAVE to tackle the bureaucratic and organizational implications of new technologies. Suppose we procure large numbers of long-range, conventionally armed cruise or tactical ballistic missiles. Who will control them? Will they belong to the field artillery units of the Army or to the fighter wings of the Air Force? How will the military fit such new weapons systems, and doctrines for their use, into existing organizations, which are accustomed to using other kinds of weapons? Or take the “cultural” problem posed by stealthy aircraft. The problem is to teach a bomber pilot or a fighter pilot who has been brought up to think and fight in a dangerous, but essentially open and crowded, environment to work like a submarine skipper: quietly, alone, and hidden from enemy view.

Military organizations have an undeniable difficulty with such problems, but it is not because of inbred obtuseness, or of an instinctive distaste for new technology. Think of the auto industry’s current effort to robotize their assembly lines, and you have a rough idea of the task. Competition rewards companies that can adapt to new technologies. They profit, their less flexible competitors go bust. In peacetime, at least, the military doesn’t have a chance to put its handling of new technology to such a clear test.

There is no guarantee that America will successfully adapt to the revolution in conventional warfare. It is sobering to note that, despite our generally superior technological base, we have often lagged behind the Soviets in deploying (as opposed to inventing) new technology—the anti-tank missile is a case in point. But if we can exploit our own inherent advantages and compensate for our weaknesses, we will be better able to defend ourselves and our allies from direct attack or subterranean terrorism. We have no choice whether to run in this marathon. But if we make the effort, we can map out the route.

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Iranamok is not alone.

SCANDAL SHEET

ONE BLESSING of Iranamok for the Reagan administration is that it is distracting attention from a collection of other scandals that would be considered remarkable in normal times. The arms sales and diversion of funds to the *contras* is just one of many areas where the administration is under investigation. The House Subcommittee on Civil Service recently counted 200 allegations of administration malfeasance. Many of these are silly, and some have long been settled. Nevertheless, most people have lost track of all the special prosecutors and independent investigations currently at work. Here, then, is a brief guide:

Michael Deaver. According to the indictment drawn up by independent counsel Whitney North Seymour Jr., former White House aide and close friend of the Reagans Michael K. Deaver willfully lied twice to the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and three times to a federal grand jury investigating possible conflicts of interest in his lobbying business. The charges stem from the 1978 Ethics in Government Act, which prohibits senior government officials from lobbying anyone at their former agencies for a year, and bars for life any lobbying by ex-officials on matters in which they participated “personally and substantially” while in government. When he was under investigation for allegedly violating both aspects of the law, Deaver was questioned by the subcommittee and the grand jury about contacts he had with clients he represented as well as officials he had worked with.

When asked by the subcommittee if in his work on behalf of the International Cultural Society of Korea (a foundation run by a crony of President Chun Doo Hwan) he had done anything to facilitate a meeting between President Reagan and Korean representative Kim Kihwan, Deaver twice answered, “No, sir.” In fact, as the indictment says, Deaver suggested the visit. His firm helped write the letter from Kihwan requesting the meeting. He advised U.S. Ambassador Richard Walker on how to arrange for Kihwan to meet with Reagan. Learning that the visit had not yet been scheduled while Kihwan was already en route to Washington, Deaver requested the help of John Poindexter at the National Security Council in arranging it.

Deaver also was asked whether he had had any contacts with anyone in the West Wing or any members of the NSC other than those he had noted on his registration forms. Deaver replied that he “didn’t ever talk to anybody in the West Wing of the White House,” and twice said that he could not recall “any other contacts with the NSC.” The indictment lists eight such meetings between Deaver and West Wing or NSC officials involving six separate clients of his firm.

Before the grand jury, Deaver insisted that he could not recall any government contact he made on behalf of his client TWA Airlines. Nor could he recall “any specific time,

any specific reference to acid rain" in any White House meeting he attended before March 6, 1985. (He was hired by the Canadian government to deal explicitly with that issue.) Deaver reiterated this response, in a variety of forms, 20 times. He also said he "did not recall" any discussions with "anybody in the government," apart from Treasury Secretary James Baker, regarding tax breaks for Puerto Rico desired by his client, the investment firm of Smith Barney.

Yet, according to the indictment, Deaver apparently did all of these things. On behalf of TWA, he met with (West Wing) White House official Roger Porter, Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, and her deputy, James H. Burnley IV. He attended six White House meetings in which the acid rain question was discussed before March 6, 1985, and actively supported the idea of appointing Drew Lewis as a special envoy to deal with the question. And Deaver contacted Secretary of State George Shultz, vice presidential chief of staff Craig Fuller, and national security adviser Robert McFarlane on the Puerto Rican tax matter that concerned Smith Barney.

If, as the indictment suggests, Deaver violated the Ethics in Government Act so consistently, why is he being indicted only for lying about these violations? Seymour is not talking, but legal experts speculate that the statute itself is weak in "jury appeal" and thus makes it quite difficult to achieve convictions. The law also is fraught with complications and exceptions that lead prosecutors to try to piggyback their indictments on less murky areas of the law, such as perjury.

Lyn Nofziger. Like Deaver, former White House director of political affairs Lyn Nofziger is under investigation by special prosecutor James C. McKay for allegedly violating the 1978 Ethics Act. Nofziger quit the White House in January 1982 to open a lobbying firm. Four months later—that is, less than a year—he signed a letter to James E. Jenkins, deputy to Edwin Meese, then presidential counselor, asking help in convincing the Army to award a \$32 million contract to the New York-based Wedtech Corporation. The Army was determined not to choose Wedtech. The newly created contractor had performed so badly on an earlier contract that it had been barred from competing on another one. But normal channels were bypassed and Wedtech got its contract. Jenkins presided over a White House meeting to discuss the contract in late 1982. In 1984 he left the White House; in October 1985 he signed on as a consultant to Wedtech.

Nofziger's firm received Wedtech stock reportedly worth between \$720,000 and \$1 million. Later it was revealed that Wedtech representatives had misrepresented themselves in order to qualify for a special set-aside program for minority-owned firms. In addition to Nofziger, the Wedtech scam has led to the investigations of 20 public officials, including Democratic Representatives Mario Biaggi and Robert Garcia of New York.

Nofziger is also accused of writing to William Clark, who was the national security adviser at the time, seeking help in retaining a foreign rice contract for the Los Angeles-based Early California Industries. Nofziger told Clark that

unless South Korea was pressured to change its mind about its rice supplier, districts represented by liberal Democrats including Vic Fazio and Tony Coelho would benefit. The letter was written in December 1982, while the one-year prohibition against contact with his former office was still in effect.

THEODORE OLSON. Former Assistant Attorney General Theodore Olson is under investigation by a special prosecutor for allegedly misleading the House Judiciary Committee about some documents relating to the 1983 EPA "Superfund" scandal.

In a complex sequence of events surrounding the congressional-executive battle over EPA documents relating to the Superfund, Olson advised EPA Director Anne Burford to claim executive privilege and withhold certain documents subpoenaed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Burford resigned after being cited in contempt of Congress, and the documents were eventually turned over. But a few months later, the House Judiciary Committee examined the role of the Justice Department in advising Burford. It concluded that Justice Department lawyers Olson, then-Deputy Attorney General Edward C. Schmults, and then-Deputy Attorney General Carol E. Dinkins may have given false testimony to Congress by refusing to identify some of the documents they had relating to the EPA matter.

Following a request from the House committee, a special prosecutor, Alexia J. Morrison, was appointed to investigate Olson, but Attorney General Meese has refused to grant her permission to include Schmults and Dinkins. Meese did not deny that the latter two may have misled the committee, but he insisted that they had "no criminal intent" if they had done so. In addition to the year-long Morrison investigation, the department recently acknowledged that it has asked the special court to appoint two more special prosecutors in cases involving high-level Reagan administration figures. One of those under investigation is reportedly W. Lawrence Wallace, the former assistant attorney general who resigned in 1986 amid questions about his personal finances. Wallace and the still unknown figure would bring the total number of independent counsels investigating various administration officials to six.

Faith Ryan Whittlesey. One high-profile Reagan appointee who has so far avoided a special prosecutor is the ambassador to Switzerland, Faith Ryan Whittlesey. On the basis of allegations made by former members of her embassy staff and the House Subcommittee on International Operations, the Justice Department conducted a probe into the embassy's operations and concluded the appointment of a special prosecutor was unnecessary. The subcommittee then conducted its own investigation and charged that Whittlesey showed poor judgment in her hiring policies and acceptances of contributions to her "Enhanced Representation Fund," as well as the disbursement of those funds.

The Justice investigation centered on Whittlesey's decision to hire Robert W. Reilly, whose father, Frank E. Reilly, contributed \$5,000 to Whittlesey's entertainment

"I'm in Washington talking with a Deputy Director in the Defense Department. It's budget time and he's trying to get his part of a \$312 billion budget passed through Congress. He's frustrated...and believe me, he's got reason to be. The budget information he needs is coming from computers all over the world that can't talk to each other. It's a serious problem but I assure him Wang has solved it



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fund. Reilly accepted the position on October 18, 1985. His father's donation was made on November 12. On October 29 and 30 and November 1 and 2, Whittlesey entertained the Reillys in Bern, according to State Department vouchers. In a November 1 letter to Frank and Toni Reilly, Whittlesey thanked the couple for "your kind offer to help me with my Representational Fund," and enclosed information on how donations are made. In the next paragraph she promised to look after "Bob . . . with tender loving care." On November 18 Reilly was sworn into the newly created position of executive assistant to the ambassador, with an annual salary of \$62,404. Justice Department investigators did not believe that any quid pro quo had been involved with the elder Reilly's contribution.

Justice expanded its probe of the Reilly incident to include Whittlesey's aggressive campaign on behalf of her Enhanced Representation Fund as well as allegations by her staff members in Bern that she ordered them not to cooperate with a State Department investigation of her operations. With the help of wealthy California backers, Whittlesey solicited over \$80,000 in contributions to this fund before the State Department took control of it out of her hands. The subcommittee found that Whittlesey used the fund "as an augmentation of her personal income rather than augmenting her official representational allowance." Among the expenses she charged to the fund was "roundtrip airfare from the U.S. for a guitarist to play at a 4th of July party. . . ." The guitarist was Jesse Helms's foreign policy adviser, Christopher Manion.

Whittlesey vigorously denied to Justice Department officials the allegation made by her former deputy chief of mission, foreign service officer Eric A. Kunsman, that she threatened to replace him if he cooperated with the requests of the State Department inspector general's office instead of "assisting me in defeating those investigating me." At the conclusion of the investigation, Attorney General Meese—who enjoyed a \$385 dinner at Whittlesey's embassy that was vouchered not once but twice—decided that the combined charges against Whittlesey did not merit the appointment of a special prosecutor. He justified the decision on what he said was "the absence of any reasonable prospect of conviction."

IN ADDITION to these cases, numerous lower-level probes of Reagan appointees continue in agencies such as Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Education, the Civil Rights Commission, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, and even the American Battle Monuments Commission—to name just a few. Former Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan, the first Cabinet member in history to be indicted while in office, is currently standing trial in New York State Supreme Court in the Bronx on one count of grand larceny, 125 counts of falsifying business records, and 11 counts of filing false business documents.

The president's defenders, in the Tower Commission and elsewhere, have insisted that the lawlessness of the Iran/*contra* affair is an "aberration" from the true nature of

the Reagan administration. But Iranamok is beginning to look more like a rule than an exception.

ERIC ALTERMAN

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Israel's uneasy relations with South Africa.

PRETORIA CONNECTION

A Reagan administration report to Congress on weapons trade with South Africa, released April 1, names Israel as a major supplier of weapons and weapons technology to South Africa. France, Italy, West Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland are named, too, but it is Israel's name that stands out in the report and in the reaction to it. Strange that a nation built on the ashes of the Holocaust should now be associated with a racist, repressive regime. But so it is. Undeniably so.

Though the report is supposed to be classified, and the congressional hearings to follow will be closed, the contents will leak, probably selectively. The report itself is scrupulously objective and does not single out Israel. But in the ensuing commentary we may not hear much about the German submarines and helicopters; the British radars, maritime reconnaissance equipment, and missiles; Swedish naval cannons; Italian electronics; French avionics, armored cars, helicopters, arms, and ammunition; Canadian artillery add-on engineering and helicopters; Denmark's position as a key transfer point for arms from the four corners of the earth to South Africa and its involvement in the South African arms industry; or the supply of rocket launching equipment by Switzerland—all violations of the 1977 U.N. arms embargo.

Nor will we hear enough about America's own role: a flow of navigational equipment, encoding devices, image intensifiers, high-voltage police batons, and a whole array of computers from IBM, Sperry UNIVAC, and Data General to the South African defense establishment and its procurement agencies.

Israel's trade with South Africa (\$237 million last year) is about seven percent of America's (\$3.4 billion) and less than a tenth of Japan's (\$2.9 billion), Germany's (\$2.8 billion), and England's (\$2.6 billion). Italy, France, Belgium, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Spain, Canada, and Switzerland all beat Israel. South Africa has 140 trade partners, including 46 of the 52 members of the Organization of African Unity.

The hypocrisy of others, however, does not constitute a defense of Israel. All it says is that others do not have a right to dictate unilateral morality to Israel. At least in Israel's case the relationship with South Africa is based on need, not

greed. None of South Africa's other suppliers is in a state of war, as Israel is, and none spends 40 percent of its available budget on defense, as Israel does. For France, the United States, Switzerland, and America's NATO allies (who spend just four percent of their GNPs on their own defense, thanks in large part to the American taxpayer), supplying arms to South Africa was a matter of industrial choice, not survival.

Moreover, none has been required to build up a huge military industrial infrastructure that employs 18 percent of the labor force, made necessary mainly because the West showed no restraint in its unbridled race to supply advanced weapons to the Arab world. At last count, there were 28 American military systems in service with both the Israeli Defense Forces and the Arab confrontation states. To ensure its qualitative edge—the cornerstone of Israel's deterrent posture—Israel has to have a highly sophisticated industrial military infrastructure. To offset the horrendous non-recurring research and development costs, military exports are essential.

Israel's relations with South Africa are a relatively recent development. Before 1973 contacts were minimal and commercial, often through the 120,000-strong South African Jewish community. Israel's efforts in Africa traditionally had been directed toward black-ruled nations, in the hope that this would win Israel votes at the U.N. and the belief that these developing countries could benefit from Israel's development experience. When Golda Meir was prime minister, Israel even made a donation to the Organization of African Unity—which the South Africans considered a "terrorist organization." Pretoria reacted by limiting South African Jewish contributions to Israel.

Several developments in the 1970s changed all that. In 1973 black Africa cut its relations with Israel on Arab dictate. In 1975 the U.N. declared that Zionism was racism, thereby placing Israel in the same category as South Africa. This psychologically created a symbiotic bond between two declared pariah states. And in 1978 Israel lost its biggest arms market, Iran, when the Shah was deposed. Since the European, American, Arab, Chinese, and many South American markets were closed to Israel, the temptation to deal with South Africa became irresistible.

By the time Israel started to penetrate the South African market, it faced fierce competition from the French, British, Germans, Italians, Dutch, and others. Today, other than the Saar missile boat and the Gabriel sea-to-sea missile, there is not a single identifiable Israeli weapons system in service in the South African military. The armor is British and French, the aircraft are French. Even the famed Israeli Uzi submachine guns used by the South African military, often presented as a symbol of Israeli-South African military cooperation, are from Belgium, built under license from Israel since the early 1960s.

If Israel ceases military dealings with South Africa, the vacuum will be filled within hours by the many other nations that are eager to purvey their wares, and that remain above the consequences of the Reagan administration's report because they do not receive American foreign military assistance.

Moreover, even a successful weapons embargo will not hurt the government of Pretoria very much, for South Africa—through the diligence of ARMSCOR—is militarily independent. Actually, South Africa exports arms to Chile, Taiwan, Iraq, Paraguay, and others. One of the areas where South Africa is most vulnerable is oil. There were 251 million barrels of oil sold to South Africa between 1980 and 1984—almost entirely supplied by the Arab nations that forced black Africa to cut its relations with Israel: Saudi Arabia (35 percent), the United Arab Emirates (34 percent), Oman (15 percent), and Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait (16 percent combined).

Last month the Israeli government announced that it was imposing restrictions on trade, tourism, and military sales to South Africa. The statement referred specifically to "future" military sales, conforming with the language of the U.N. embargo but leaving open the possibility of continuing current contracts.

Nevertheless, the restrictions will probably have some meaning. Not because Israel has found new morality on the subject, but because, again, things have changed. Israel is on the brink of relations with the Russians, and in the process of renewing its relations in black Africa. Israel has a developing market in China and was recently granted a special "non-NATO ally" status with the United States and made a beneficiary of trade agreements that open up American markets to Israeli goods as never before. Furthermore, Israel's balance of trade has improved, mainly from over \$2 billion in foreign currency savings from the drop in the price of oil.

Despite the sensitivity that Israel has to show about the 120,000 Jews in South Africa—many aged, since the young have mostly left—Israel could join the family of nations in trying to bring about a better future in South Africa. Whether sanctions are the best way of ensuring change in South Africa, however, is another question.

HIRSH GOODMAN

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FDR's son and the ultimate interest group.

GEEZER SLEAZE

"MY FATHER started Social Security. Now we must act to save Social Security and Medicare!" So commence the millions of appeals sent out by James Roosevelt last year on behalf of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. "URGENT! IMPORTANT SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION ENCLOSED" screams the bright orange lettering on the "Time Dated Official"

envelope. "Never in the 51 years since my father, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, started the Social Security system have there been such threats to Social Security and Medicare benefits," says the letter. It goes on to request a \$10 contribution, without which the elderly may soon "face a crippling financial hardship."

Since its first mailing in 1983, the National Committee has become one of the most visible organizations in the elderly lobby. At the age of 79, Jimmy Roosevelt ostensibly heads one of the largest direct-mail programs in the nation and controls America's fourth-largest political action committee. Last year mailings using his name reached 20 million mailboxes and brought in nearly \$30 million in contributions.

Established elderly groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons and the National Council of Senior Citizens (who may well fear the competition) have criticized the group's inflammatory rhetoric. In 1984 the Justice Department investigated the National Committee's use of the Congressional Seal on Roosevelt's letterhead. (The eagle's head now faces right instead of left in the mailings.) The Postal Service questioned the letters' similarity to those sent out by the Social Security Administration. (The wording on the envelope has been slightly altered.) But the National Committee's critics have yet to find anything actually illegal about it.

In fact, Roosevelt's committee is just the logical extension of recent developments in the direct-mail business. The hysterical hard sell and petty deception are only marginally worse than that in packages mailed out by Common Cause and the American Civil Liberties Union. What distinguishes the National Committee is that it is entirely the creation of the direct-mail industry. In politics as in commerce, marketing now comes first. Political appetites are inflamed, and an interest group is created to satisfy them, for the purpose of profiting from the fund-raising.

THE EXISTENCE of political factions, or interest groups, was foreseen by the Founders and in fact was considered vital to democracy. James Madison, in *The Federalist* No. 10, defined a faction as "a number of citizens . . . who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens." Under a federal system, he argued, so many competing factions would cancel each other out into something resembling the common good.

The faction industry made a great leap forward with the invention of direct mail, which uses high-volume mailings, computerized lists, and gaudy packaging to "prospect" for members and then to hound them relentlessly for funds. Direct-mail fund-raising techniques have permitted groups such as Jesse Helms's Congressional Club and the National Rifle Association to reshape the political landscape.

In the case of the National Committee, however, the faction was both conceived of and created by the fund-raisers. Roosevelt, who has led a colorful and occasionally feckless career, was signed on as a consultant in 1982 by a conservative direct-mail outfit in California called Butcher-

Forde, which had worked to pass Howard Jarvis's Proposition 13. (Last year Butcher-Forde helped to unseat Rose Bird from the California Supreme Court.) A Washington lawyer named Bill Wewer, who had worked with Butcher-Forde on the Jarvis campaign, drew up the papers to incorporate the National Committee to Preserve Social Security as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. And in 1983 Butcher-Forde began to send out letters in Roosevelt's name.

Even in an industry given to hyperbole and distortion, the National Committee's letters have been exceptional. Early mailings (sent after the 1983 Social Security reforms, which were extremely favorable to current recipients) claimed that Congress was cutting Social Security to allocate more money for illegal aliens and limousines for members of Congress. "The politicians say we can't afford Social Security. But they don't say we can't afford ever increasing welfare payments . . . millions upon millions of new South American and Asian and Haitian immigrants . . . [and] their limousines and foreign junkets." Today, after countless revisions, Roosevelt's letters continue to talk of "deep cuts" in Social Security, even though it is the one program that has been consistently shielded from even modest budget cuts.

An "Urgent Action Gram" sent in November 1985 solicited funds for a lawsuit that was never filed (at the advice of counsel, Roosevelt says). A series of letters sent this fall asked for a "special assessment" to build the "Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Social Security and Medicare Building," at a cost of \$2.8 million. "Butcher-Forde came up with that idea," said Wewer. "They said that people like to see their money go into real estate." The memorial was dropped when the response rate proved disappointing.

Asked about the alleged memorial at a congressional hearing, Roosevelt said he knew nothing about it. An affable man, he exhibits a Reaganesque lack of concern for details about the organization he ostensibly heads. (Neither Roosevelt nor officials of Butcher-Forde would agree to be interviewed.) In 1986 Roosevelt stopped receiving consulting fees from Butcher-Forde and began to draw a \$60,000 salary directly from his committee. At the congressional hearing, accused of practicing "geriatric terrorism," Roosevelt turned on his father's jaunty grin and said: "You know you're doing something right when you have four million members. You can't trick that many people."

SUCH INSouciance is nothing new to Roosevelt. During FDR's administration, Jimmy was a constant embarrassment. He went to work for the National Grain Yeast Corporation, which had been engaged in bootlegging, and later represented a movie mogul named Joseph Schenck, who was under investigation by the Treasury Department for defrauding the government. In the 1970s, after serving both in Congress and at the United Nations, Roosevelt took a job with Investors Overseas Services, which dissolved shortly thereafter amid charges of fraud.

As in these earlier episodes, Roosevelt's role with the National Committee is as a front man, not as principal

malefactor. The real beneficiaries of the National Committee are the companies that handle its direct mail. In 1985 \$21 million, or 88 percent of all expenses, went to printing and postage. Salaries, by way of comparison, accounted for one percent. Much of that money went directly to Butcher-Forde, whose 19-year contract provides for 5 cents per letter and an "administrative fee" of 15 percent of all other costs. On the National Committee's most recent mailing, Butcher-Forde made over \$1 million. And the company earns still more money by selling the National Committee's mailing lists to other advocacy groups.

Wewer argues that the cost of the mailings themselves should be credited to the committee's "educational" function, since only a few sentences of each letter directly ask for money. By this tortured calculation, only 15 percent of the committee's budget goes toward fund-raising. Wewer has collected about \$70,000 a year as general counsel of the National Committee, which is only one of the many groups he represents. The committee's treasurer is Blanche Kelley, whose company, Kelley Consulting, has been paid millions of dollars to perform the "caging"—opening the mail and collecting the checks.

The committee's fourth director (besides Roosevelt, Wewer, and Kelley) is Kathleen Marquardt, who heads a think tank called the International Policy Studies Organization. IPSO shares the National Committee's address and phone number, but no one at the National Committee knew where Marquardt could be reached. "In the past, things have gotten a bit incestuous," Wewer admits, adding that Kelley and Marquardt will resign shortly.

FACED WITH manifold critics, the National Committee's response was to buy as many of them as possible. This summer the organization went on a shopping spree, hiring officials from the AARP and the National Council of Senior Citizens, committee staffers from the Hill, and even the former acting director of the Social Security Administration, Martha McSteen. Keith Tarr-Whalen, as director of the rival elderly coalition called Save Our Security, used to be a savage critic of the National Committee. Now he is head of its \$5 million PAC.

This year the National Committee's hottest issue is the "notch baby" controversy (see "Notch Babies" by Timothy Noah, *TNR*, December 1, 1986), which refers to people born between 1917 and 1921 who believe (mistakenly) that their Social Security benefits have been cut by the government. Because the notch baby argument is based on false premises and because the proposed solution—retroactive benefits worth nearly \$200 billion over the first five years—would bankrupt the Social Security system, the rest of the aging lobby has steered clear of the Notch.

But in September Roosevelt delivered 15 tons of identical petitions on the notch baby issue to Capitol Hill—filling 821 cardboard boxes, which were neatly stacked on the steps of the Capitol as a background to Roosevelt's press conference. It was perhaps the *reductio ad absurdum* of interest-group politics. Because the petitions were so bulky, each congressional office was provided with com-

puter tapes containing the names and addresses of the petitioners. The petitioners were answered by a computer-generated letter from their representatives at an approximate cost to the government of a million dollars.

Although the sheer volume of mail generated by the National Committee is staggering, the political content is often vague. A typical petition demands that "every commitment . . . be kept" to Social Security beneficiaries. Anything more concrete would presumably bring down the response rate. The "rich and powerful forces" who are bent on dismantling Social Security are never specified in the mailings. Depending on which official you ask, they include President Reagan (whose candidacy Roosevelt supported), the entire Congress, or presidential dark horse Pete du Pont.

But were the National Committee to become an effective lobby, as its critics suggest, it might well go from a minor rip-off to a serious menace. Tarr-Whalen sees the elderly as a force that could displace organized labor as the dominant special interest in the Democratic Party. In the 1986 elections, the National Committee rounded up 100,000 volunteers to work in local campaigns, more than twice the number that the United Auto Workers supplied. The AARP, Tarr-Whalen notes, doesn't even have a PAC, which is "like playing ball with one hand tied behind your back." The National Committee's PAC has passed out contributions to hundreds of members of Congress, including its most vocal opponents. "There are nearly 30 million senior citizens. So far they have been defending their interests in a spontaneous and unorganized way," he said. "Imagine how much clout they would have if they were organized."

ALTHOUGH THE National Committee regularly takes the most extreme positions on elderly issues, they are in a deeper sense non-ideological. Roosevelt has been a guest in the Reagan White House, and Butcher-Forde is just as happy to work with the loonies of the right as with the demagogues of the left. This "pragmatism" is reflected in its mailings, which combine a big-spending agenda with violently anti-government rhetoric. Though politically inconsistent, this combination fits perfectly with the logic of direct mail, which appeals to the passions rather than reason.

In the capitalist system, the cure for success is competition, and the National Committee may soon fall victim to its own profitability. In the past few years it has spawned a dozen imitators—with names like the Social Security Network and the Social Security Protection Bureau—all of which promise to "protect" their members' benefits, and three of which are also headed by former members of Congress. Perhaps because the market is saturated, the National Committee's revenues leveled out at \$29 million in 1986, after tripling in 1985. Soon it may be time for a National Committee to Preserve the National Committee to Preserve Social Security.

CROCKER COULSON

The returns are in on the 'supply-side' experiment.

REAGANOMICS, R.I.P.

BY UWE E. REINHARDT

AS THE Congressional Budget Office observes in its latest *Economic and Budget Outlook*, published in January, a verdict on Reaganomics boils down to the question of justice between generations. Our fiscal policy since 1981 has allowed people living today to enjoy higher consumption at the expense of those who will be living tomorrow.

It is not clear whether President Reagan actually meant to throw this party or whether things simply got out of hand, as seems to happen so often in his reign. He achieved the presidency through eloquent denunciations of "big-spending government," while more sophisticated Reaganites attacked decades of "Keynesian demand management." By "demand management" they meant federal policies that sought to tease added employment and economic growth out of the economy through added government expenditures, or through transfer programs that channeled income from well-to-do individuals who would have saved and invested it to lower-income groups who spent it on consumption. That fiscal policy, it was argued, treated much too cavalierly the supply side of the economy whence economic growth actually springs.

In 1979, when these "supply-side" complaints were reaching a crescendo, about 62.8 percent of America's total national output was absorbed by personal consumption. About 18 percent went for private investment. About 19 percent was spent by all levels of government to run their operations. Finally, a very tiny sliver—0.1 percent of real GNP—represented the excess of investments by Americans abroad over investments by foreigners made here.

Only 18 percent for private investment is low by international standards. In fact, it is the lowest in the industrialized world. Nations enjoying more rapid growth set aside a much larger proportion of their GNP for the replacement and enhancement of their capital stock. In Japan, for example, the percentage has tended to be in the mid-30s; in West Germany it has tended to be in the mid-20s.

The key element of any supply-side strategy, therefore, must be to reduce the share of GNP going to consumption and government, in order to increase the share set aside for capital formation—a set-aside also known as gross domestic saving. A second element is encouragement of the nation's entrepreneurs to avail themselves of these savings and to invest them wisely.

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A third and much overlooked element ought to be developing an accounting system that splits the government's share into expenditures that are truly in the nature of consumption and those that are truly in the nature of long-term investments—for example, the building of a physical infrastructure or the education and training of the nation's future labor force, a process properly labeled by economists as "human-capital formation." Reaganite propaganda encourages us to think of all government spending (except for defense) as consumption, or simple waste. It is an expensive mistake, as our aging public infrastructure demonstrates.

By the nature of the task, any true supply-side strategy will be multifaceted and complex. Unfortunately, in the late 1970s and in the presidential campaign of 1980, that task was depicted as child's play in the alluring teachings of a new cult led by the economist Arthur Laffer, its affable and verbally facile guru. The cult's message was spread by an equally facile troop of proselytes, some of whom had developed both their verbal skills and the requisite hauteur as writers for the *Wall Street Journal's* supercilious editorial page.

To accomplish the desired shift of resources from consumption into capital formation, the Laffer cult offered a simple and politically appealing strategy: an across-the-board cut in federal income tax rates. The cut in income tax rates would lead to such outbursts of added taxable economic activity that tax revenues would actually increase. American entrepreneurs, enticed by the prospect of higher after-tax rewards, would employ new armies of workers, themselves enticed to work (or to work longer hours) by higher after-tax wages. For capital, the reborn entrepreneurs could count on massive infusions of new savings. These savings would come from American consumers, encouraged by higher after-tax interest rates to cancel planned dinners and vacations for the sake of saving for a better future. (Some members of the cult talked of a doubling of savings as a share of disposable income.) The capital pool would be supplemented by higher business savings made possible by higher after-tax profits.

And, finally, there would be positive government savings at long last. Because the cut in tax rates would raise total federal revenues, the cult assured us, the federal budget would be balanced by 1984. Along with the traditional surpluses of state and local governments, a balanced federal budget would make for a positive contribution to the pool of savings by government as a whole.

Five years later, the sad conclusion of the story can be

BROOKINGS

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BROOKINGS

read right off the many tables included in the *Economic Report of the President*, delivered to Congress in January. Did the pent-up economic energy gush forth as President Reagan and his supply-side cultists had predicted? Did Americans save and invest a larger slice of their GNP? Did legions of hitherto slumbering American entrepreneurs crawl out of the woodwork? And were new jobs created in unprecedented numbers?

LET'S BEGIN with a look at the federal budget. Reagan's record can fairly be described as replacing the much-derided policy of "tax and tax, spend and spend" with a policy of "spend even more and just borrow." Combined with an inexorable upward drift in federal spending, the 1981-83 tax cut triggered federal budget deficits that now exceed \$200 billion a year. This deficit grew even as the economy recovered from the deep recession of 1982-83. To hope that it will gradually melt away without either substantial tax increases or painful reductions in federal expenditures—spending cuts of a size that Reagan himself has never even dared to propose—is a pipe dream.

It has been suggested that the administration deliberately triggered the large deficits to pressure Congress into overall spending cuts. If that was the strategy, it failed. To be sure, some federal outlays were curbed. There have been cuts in federal support for students and for research, for example, and near-poor working mothers lost their food stamps, welfare, and Medicaid. But for every dollar thus saved, several new dollars were spent. Outlays on national defense almost doubled from \$157 billion in 1981 to \$273.4 billion in 1986. Interest on the federal debt doubled from \$68.7 billion in 1981 to \$136 billion in 1986.

Instinctively reluctant to take on any politically powerful group, the president capitulated pre-emptively to the aged, promising rich and poor alike that their path to the federal treasury would remain unobstructed. That promise was kept. Between 1981 and 1986, Social Security benefits increased from \$138 billion to almost \$200 billion, while outlays on Medicare almost doubled from \$41 billion to \$74 billion and are slated to exceed \$100 billion by 1990 (a development, incidentally, described by a hysterical medical community as "never-ending, brutal budget cuts"). The president capitulated pre-emptively to the farm lobby as well. In the late 1970s the federal farm-price support program absorbed about \$4 billion. By 1986 that figure had risen to \$26 billion and was heading higher.

A theme vigorously marketed by the president and by his political allies, such as the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, is that Congress bears sole responsibility for the inexorable upward march of federal expenditures. The implication is that if Congress had only passed the president's budgets, the deficit would have disappeared by now rather than doubling and tripling. Reagan's frequent endorsement of a balanced-budget amendment was meant to underscore this point.

In fact, as the *Wall Street Journal* itself reported in January, Reagan asked Congress to approve expenditures of \$4.307 trillion for fiscal years 1982-86 and Congress actually approved \$4.342 trillion—only some \$35 billion more over five years. In other words, those "big spenders on the Hill" spent less than one percent more than Reagan himself wanted to spend. To be sure, Congress and the president differed over the allocation of the total, as might be expected in a democracy. But the overall budget record demolishes the fantasy of a president valiantly seeking to control a big-spending Congress.

WHAT OF THAT proverbial national pie, the GNP? Did Reaganomics realign the slices in the manner envisaged by the Laffer cult? The remaining cultists like to emphasize growth rates over the period 1982-84 or 1982-85, when the economy climbed out of its steepest postwar recession back to today's more normal plateau. For a more realistic picture that covers the full Reagan era and isn't skewed by the business cycle, let's compare the pie of 1979—the depths of Carterite malaise—with the pie of 1986. The slice of GNP going to personal consumption has increased by three percentage points, from 62.8 percent in 1979 to 65.8 percent in 1986. The government's slice also has increased, by 1.3 percentage points, from 19.1 percent to 20.4 percent. The only slice that hasn't increased is the "supply-side" slice—gross private domestic investment.

How could two slices increase, the third not change, and the whole thing still add up to one whole pie? It doesn't. In 1986 total domestic spending by Americans on personal consumption, private investment, and government operations added up to 104 percent of GNP. That is, what we spent on goods and services in 1986 exceeded by four percent (or \$150 billion in constant 1982 dollars) what we produced. The extra four percent came from the oft-vilified Japanese, and from the Canadians, Germans, and other nations with whom we are running a trade deficit. Between 1979 and 1986, America's "net foreign investments" abroad became "net American borrowing" from abroad. To enable us to have a larger consumption slice, a larger government slice, and about the same investment slice, the foreigners exported us machine tools, Walkmans, BMWs, and fine wines, and we exported to them in return American-made IOUs (bonds and notes) or simply legal titles to American assets (real estate or stock certificates). Unhappily for our children, they will have to redeem these pieces of paper with goods and services some time in the future. Should our children refuse, we shall then redeem the IOUs by simply transferring to foreigners legal title to real assets our kids would otherwise have inherited.

There is nothing wrong with importing capital. Foreign capital helped develop this nation in the last century, and it can help us now. If we had avoided huge government deficits and increased our domestic investment beyond the traditional 18 percent, our children would have plenty of extra money to service the foreign debt and to be better off themselves. But we used the foreign capital to increase our

consumption and government spending, not our investment. From 1981 to 1986 savings as a share of disposable personal income fell from 7.5 percent to 3.9 percent. In the last half of 1986, it stood at an annual rate of 2.8 percent—barely a third of the rate at the beginning of the “supply-side” revolution. Foreigners have been making up the difference. That is the trouble.

We are in the habit of cursing other nations for devastating our export industries with their trade surpluses. But without these foreigners’ contributions to our feast, we would not have been able to maintain real gross domestic investment at about 18 percent of real GNP without either tightening our belts as consumers, or forcing the president and Congress into the embarrassing task of chasing even middle- and upper-income voters away from the public trough. (Even if literally every program for the poor were taken off the government’s books, that would not close half the budget gap of \$200 billion.) But what kind of a party would that have been?

MEANWHILE, what of America’s entrepreneurs? Has our festival inspired them to new achievements? Reliable data on the penchant for entrepreneurship are not easily had. The president’s report to Congress does contain a table on business formation and failures. It shows that between 1980 and 1986 there were actually fewer new business incorporations each year than in 1976-80. Business failures, on the other hand, increased each year during the 1980s. In the late 1970s the annual rate of failure decreased. The Index of Net Business Formation (1967 = 100) ranged in the high 130s during the late 1970s; it stood at only 121 in 1984-85.

In 1980 the civilian unemployment rate stood at 7.1 percent. In 1986 it stood at 7.0 percent. Now, it has been argued that the unemployment rate is too negative a concept, because it obscures the astounding number of new jobs created during the Reagan era. Was the number really astounding? According to the president’s report, total civilian employment stood at 100.4 million in 1981 and at 109.6 million in 1986, a gain of 9.2 percent or 9.2 million jobs. During the preceding five-year period total civilian employment grew from 88.8 million to 100.4 million—a gain of 13 percent, or 11.6 million new jobs.

And finally, what about the size of the pie? Did it grow more rapidly in the 1980s than in the late 1970s? According to the president’s report, real GNP in constant 1982 dollars was \$2.9586 trillion in 1977 and \$3.2488 trillion in 1981. That represents average annual compound growth of 2.4 percent. By 1986 real GNP stood at \$3.6765 trillion, which represents average annual compound growth of 2.5 percent over the Reagan years. During 1986 real GNP grew by 2.2 percent, and, in the words of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, “strong growth of real consumption spending [rather than capital formation] was the driving force behind demand growth for most of 1986.” Once again, could this be supply-side economics?

Not all facets of the president’s economic program have been equally dubious. Inflation has been soundly licked,

thanks in part to President Carter’s wisdom in appointing Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, but also thanks to Reagan’s steadfast support of brother Volcker. President Reagan continued the program of deregulation already set in motion by his predecessor in energy and transportation, and he extended it to the financial markets. And Reagan has given strong rhetorical support to the principles of free trade, although the actual share of our imports that are affected by some sort of trade restriction has doubled from 1980 to 1986, from 12 percent to 22 percent.

The peculiar free-lunch populism sold to the nation as “supply-side economics” may be summarized in the following flaky propositions: (1) cutting tax rates increases (government) revenue; (2) inflation can be reduced without a transitional period of unemployment; (3) government expenditures can be greatly reduced without sacrifice of anything by anyone except bureaucrats and welfare queens. The Republic won’t collapse because our leaders sold the public on these transparently false propositions—and possibly even believed them themselves. We will simply be left a little poorer in the long run than we could have been under less myopic stewardship. For, whatever Reaganomics may have been, it was not supply-side economics. It was politics as usual, practiced to please or at least not to offend powerful political constituencies, and pushed just one step further in the direction of irresponsibility.

WILL THE PARTY soon have to end? Actually, we may go on for a while. As long as other nations are willing to add dollar-denominated American IOUs to their portfolios, we can continue to live happily beyond our means. After all, what do we really mean by “means”? Like many spendthrifts, our means include wealth as well as income. And we remain a wealthy country. Should foreigners tire of holding our IOUs, they might still be happy to take legal title to our income-yielding real assets—as they already are busily doing. And we’ve got plenty of those. Even sections of Hawaii still remain on our books, and there’s Fifth Avenue in New York, and the whole state of Oregon. Why not liquidate some of these assets and live it up a little longer?

An alternative would be to go back to square one and to balance the government’s books. During 1980-86, net private savings—roughly, the amount of investable funds available after replacement of worn-out capital—has averaged 6.2 percent of GNP (down from 8.1 percent in 1970-79). Savings by state and local governments brought the total available savings pool to 7.5 percent of GNP. The federal deficit alone drained 4.1 percent of GNP from the pool—that is, more than half of it—leaving only 3.4 percent of GNP for net private capital formation beyond the replacement of worn-out capital. We did, as noted, supplement that meager pool by tapping the savings of foreigners through borrowing and the sale of real assets. If that is to cease, we must either bring the federal budget closer into balance or start saving a lot more—that is, start consuming less—as individuals. □

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

What the Biographer Saw

The English playwright Joe Orton became successful toward the end of his short life. The life ended on August 9, 1967, when his skull was hammered in by his roommate, who then committed suicide. Orton's second full-length play, *Loot*, had been produced to acclaim in London in late 1966. His success, and the signs of its increase,

Prick Up Your Ears
(Samuel Goldwyn)

were more than the roommate, Kenneth Halliwell, could bear—since he himself was a failing writer and artist, a dethroned mentor, and a spurned homosexual mate. Orton was 34; Halliwell was 41.

Orton had written a previous long play, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, and another, produced posthumously, *What the Butler Saw*, as well as four shorter works. At the time of his death he was planning a play to be called *Prick Up Your Ears*. (Ears, as has been noted, is an anagram of arse.) John Lahr used *Prick Up Your Ears* as the title of his biography of Orton; it is used again for this film based on the biography—and on Lahr doing the research for the biography. The screenplay is by Alan Bennett, himself an intelligent playwright (*The Old Country*). The director is Stephen Frears, who did *My Beautiful Laundrette* and here has the same cinematographer, Oliver Stapleton. Orton is played by Gary Oldman, who was Sid in *Sid and Nancy*; Halliwell is played by Alfred Molina, in his first (but surely not his last) major film role. Margaret Ramsay, Orton's agent and an affectionate figure in his life, is played by Vanessa Redgrave, who has played everything.

I feel as if I have just been typing a Sotheby catalog. Every one of these people is a treasure, and there are many treasures I haven't mentioned. (Two demurrals: Wallace Shawn, as Lahr, is flabby; the score by Stanley

Myers is mere movie music.) They have made a fine film marked by a contradictory combination of knife-edge precision and easy flow. Frears puts each scene before us with a skill that gets the most from it as quickly as possible; and he weaves the time-strands—various stages in Orton's life and in Lahr's inquiries into that life—with a dexterity that is somehow sardonic. Bennett's screenplay, which provides the design of the weaving, uses Lahr's investigations to underscore the life he is investigating; and Bennett, quite prudently, takes a good deal of language from Lahr's book and Orton's diaries.

John Orton—he later changed his first name to avoid confusion with John Osborne—was born in Leicester to a family inching upward from working class to lower-middle. He began his diaries in adolescence, candid from the start, not least about his sexual doings. Acting enthralled him, and he was accepted by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. There he met Halliwell, a fellow student, much better off and securely middle-class. Their hopes for acting careers gradually dwindled, and they concentrated on writing—indeed, it was Halliwell who urged Orton to write. In time they shared the small apartment that Halliwell had bought, where Orton was to be Eliza to Halliwell's Higgins. Orton did learn from him, enough to help with Halliwell's (failed) novels. Together they amused themselves by wittily and salaciously defacing library books, 83 of them, for which they were sentenced to six months' imprisonment, which separated them. During the separation, Orton began really to discover himself as a writer.

Soon after they reunited, the balance shifted: Orton was a writer, Halliwell a despairing dabbler. More, although he refused to leave Halliwell, Orton quite openly cruised the homosexual field, using public toilets as pit stops.

Soon Ramsay entered Orton's life, as agent and friend—as Halliwell's friend, too.

Halliwell helped Orton, particularly with titles (including *Prick Up Your Ears*), and Orton did what he could for Halliwell. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* may be the only work in world history dedicated to a person who later murdered its author. Still, Orton's success, together with his sex activity elsewhere, drove Halliwell over the edge. After the hammering, he wrote a note saying that the explanation was in Orton's diaries; then he took a lot of Valium.

Molina creates a large-scale, vivid portrait of a man crammed with frustrations and dammed love that—he knows—are corroding his sanity. Oldman, deceptively mild in appearance, fractures his mousy face with slyness and charm. He has an arrogance that grips as it abrades—a limber devil who, from his point of view, is merely rational. Redgrave is a genius: she fills every moment with exquisitely apt truth. A closing line of the script falls to her, and her reading of it is a parting gift. Orton's sister is mixing the ashes of the two cremated bodies, taking spoonfuls

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Man Facing Southeast. Argentine. Written and directed by Eliseo Subiela. Script, about a mental patient who may/may not be from outer space, is fair. Direction is exceptional: mature and perceptive. (Reviewed 4/6/87)

Outrageous Fortune. Silly spy chase made enjoyable by bright dialogue and performances—Shelley Long, delicately goofy, Bette Midler, overwhelmingly vulgar. (3/2/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Jonathan Demme directs Spalding Gray's one-man show tactfully, so that Gray's wit and reticent melancholy come through in this account of the making of *The Killing Fields*. (3/23/87)

Tin Men. Nickname for Baltimore salesmen of aluminum siding, 1963. A creaky sitcom at center, surrounded by wonderfully live banter and bickering. (3/30/87)

SK

from two urns and putting them in a third urn. She says she's afraid she is putting in too much of Joe. Says Redgrave, who is watching: "It's a gesture, dear, not a recipe."

Bennett's line gets Orton's flavor—which raises the subject of Orton's style. It derives, at least in part, from his (then illegal) homosexuality, which gave him a disgustingly amused view of the fraudulent morality and pomposities in the approved world. This view translated dramatically into farce, which was based on absurd premises, then was carried forward with strict logic past—triumphantly past—the bounds of decency. (On the opening night of *What the Butler Saw* in the West End, a member of the audience screamed at Sir Ralph Richardson, who was in the cast: "Give back your knighthood!") But what particularly distinguishes Orton's plays is the cool, elegant language. Noël Coward's glittering dialogue is the work of a socially ambitious middle-class person trying hard to rub elbows upward. Orton, out of the working class, never cared about mixing in high society—he went straight from a soigné award ceremony to a public toilet for a pickup. But, as he had learned to slough his provincial accent, he also learned to arch the diction of his dialogue, partly from Halliwell directly and partly from Halliwell's guidance—studying Ronald Firbank, for example. Orton believed that his style, as he perfected it, was naturalistic. It wasn't, but it became natural to him. His style's artifices are his truth, aloofly observant even of murder and funeral.

In this double-stranded film, life doesn't imitate art: it's a dead heat. I hope that the term is in something of the bad taste that Orton might have approved. I hope more strongly that he would have approved, possibly with his one-sided smile, this film that makes an agon out of his struggle to become a writer and the price he paid for winning.

Reviewing *Outrageous Fortune* (March 2), I ventured that Bette Midler suggests Brecht's idea of epic acting. *Variety* (March 18) announced that Midler will do a biographical film about Lotte Lenya, eminent as a Brecht performer. I don't quite claim influence: Midler's negotiations have been going on for a year. But I hope the news is a portent. Somewhere down the road for Midler could lie *Mother Courage*. □

What made this leading Star Wars scientist quit?

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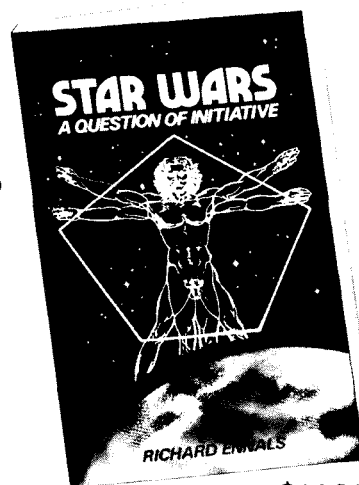
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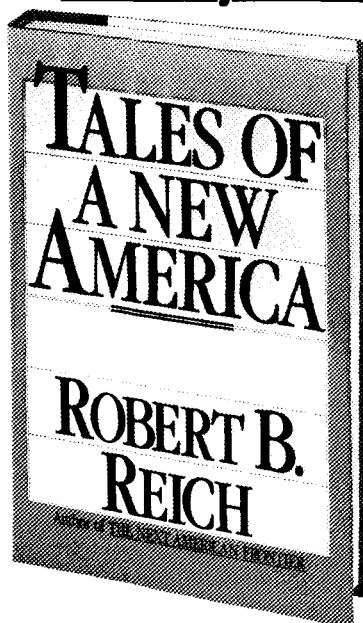
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THE WRITER AS TOURIST

The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey by Salman Rushdie

(Viking/Elisabeth Sifton Books, 171 pp., \$12.95)

When the Nicaraguan counterrevolution began to operate in the country's northern territories, with the assistance of the United States, at the beginning of 1982, Salman Rushdie suddenly felt a great sense of identification with the government of that small, turbulent Central American country. This, in spite of the fact that he had never been to Nicaragua, and knew almost nothing of its pre-revolutionary history. The Nicaraguan revolution had captured his attention two years earlier, and his sympathy; like so many progressive Western intellectuals, Rushdie was captivated by its promises of pluralism, of imagination, of freedom. For Rushdie, moreover, the accession of the Sandinista revolutionaries to power had coincided with a happy augury, so important in reaffirming one's faith in life: the birth of a child.

Shortly thereafter Rushdie became one of the sponsors of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign in London. It was quite natural that the Sandinistas would invite him to visit the country, in 1986, for the seventh anniversary of the revolution. He must have seemed like the right person to witness and to attest what was happening in Nicaragua: evidently an honest man, a well-known writer, intoxicated by the ideals that the revolution supposedly represented, and, of course, absolutely ignorant of the Nicaraguan past. Rushdie's visit lasted three weeks. During that time he spoke with the entire top rank of the revolutionary leadership. He traveled with them to political engagements, to ceremonies in which peasants were given title to the lands under the agrarian reform, to demonstrations, and so forth. In general, he had an excellent opportunity to hear them state their case. *The Jaguar Smile* is the result of that experience.

Unfortunately it is not possible, after a few days' visit, to write objectively about a country one knows almost nothing about, particularly when the visit has been organized by its government. This is even more the case when one speaks not a word of its language and is helplessly dependent upon an interpreter assigned by the government. And it is still

more the case when the visitor is locked into an itinerary that leaves almost no time to mix freely and randomly with ordinary people. (Rushdie does meet a North American woman married to a Sandinista militant, another *gringa* who has fallen in love with a native, and speaks from a position of privilege about a country that is not hers as if it were her personal property. Not exactly the Nicaraguan woman in the street.)

The Sandinistas have raised political tourism to an art form, in the best Soviet and Cuban traditions. They arrange for their visitors to undergo total immersion. They place before them set-piece dramas whose protagonists are the privileged class of the party, while the people are deployed in the background—immobile, providing local color. With the people, in whose name the revolution was made, the visitor almost never has much to do. Of course, to know the leaders of any country can be a fascinating experience. But nobody should imagine that an acquaintance with people in power qualifies one to speak with authority as an analyst of a nation's political life. Surely Rushdie would not consider anyone qualified to speak of the problems of India and Pakistan whose sole sources of information were Rajiv Gandhi and Zia ul-Haq and their associates. What foreign minister is going to reveal the secret of his strategic alliances to a visitor, above all when the latter is already won over to his cause and may already be expected to express solidarity? The risk of the truth is particularly great for the officials of a country like Nicaragua, which depends so heavily on its ability to sell a positive image abroad in order to obtain much-needed Western aid. And what revolutionary in power will offer that he or she has betrayed the interests and aspirations of the people?

Rushdie listens with fascination, and with a kind of shared fury, to the catechism of the revolution's youthful leadership. He succumbs to the attractions of power and political celebrity; to the almost abject fascination that men of action inevitably exercise over intellectuals, whether they be terrorists, bank

robbers, or convicted murderers. Rushdie in Nicaragua also is smitten by the delusion of being part of history, a form of quiet hysteria that afflicts many foreigners who visit the Sandinista state nowadays. Every functionary he meets recites a portion of the official line—the portion he imagines the visitor is most interested in hearing—like so much pollen, which Rushdie, like a bee, will propagate in the passages of the West.

Jaime Wheelock, "baby-faced and friendly," explains the regime's agrarian reform (whose titles, in truth, grant only uncertain tenure and usufruct, not fee-simple ownership, converting peasants into government employees and a recruiting pool for the army). Sergio Ramírez speaks of the government's respect for private property (a respect that is wholly arbitrary, and is the reward for politically correct behavior). Luis Carrión attributes the totality of the country's economic problems to the *contra* war. And so on. Rushdie perceives no particular contradiction in the fact that, in practically the same breath, Wheelock and Carrión also boast that the *contras* do not really constitute a serious threat, since they operate in remote frontier zones, with insufficient arms or supplies.

Somebody observes to Rushdie that writers in Nicaragua enjoy unlimited freedom. The proof, it appears, is that the only book publishing operation in the country (property of the state and the party) has brought out an anthology of writings by the dissident poet Pablo Antonio Cuadra. (Never mind that the book contains only verses written prior to the revolution, that Cuadra's subsequent work has been pushed down the memory hole.) Elsewhere, expressing still more satisfaction with what he encounters, Rushdie describes the exquisite cuisine of President Daniel Ortega's table, and the equally rarified "literary discussions" between Ernesto Cardenal and Carlos Martínez Rivas about poetry workshops that Rosario Murillo, Nicaragua's first lady and also president of the Writers' Union, is always staging for the benefit of her literary guests.

But the basic truths about the Nicaraguan revolution escape Rushdie altogether. Even the real thrill provoked by the fall of Somoza eludes him: the vast sense of relief that ran through the whole of the population once the values of the rancid bourgeoisie—pompous and contemptuous of its own people—disappeared, and with them the hated National Guard. But Rushdie also fails to per-

ceive the gray, bleak routine of scarcity, war, dogmatism and propaganda, poverty and foreign presence that followed. Instead he enumerates the purported social achievements of the Sandinistas, and runs through their litany of self-styled accomplishments—even if he had no opportunity, during his short stay, to substantiate their claims. These are the often-cited advances in education, in public health, in nutrition—all of which are based on false statistics and demagoguery, on propaganda that the innocent and incredulous visitor, inclined to look for confirmation of the social paradise he has come to see, tends to accept passively.

Today everything in Nicaragua smells of death. And the dead are all promoted to heroes of the Communist fatherland, perhaps because they are the only ones who cannot speak. The power of silence is used to justify the atrocities of the living. Death, war, fire, extermination, enemy: this is the vocabulary of the regime, and it resonates over the housetops. Describing Managua, Rushdie correctly observes that it is no longer a real capital, but a jumble of haunted ruins. Rushdie also recognizes correctly that one cannot see the city except in symbolic terms. The problem is that Rushdie cannot continue to believe in the revolution either, except by attributing symbolic value to it too.

WHEN RUSHDIE attempts to place events in a broader historical context—of which he is, again, quite ignorant—his book descends to frankly amateurish levels. His interpretation of the Nicaraguan past is simply the version he picked up from his hosts: the dictatorship of Somoza is reduced to stereotypes, to a legend of the past free of all the complexity and the contradictions that are required for a proper understanding of Nicaraguan society.

Our memories tend naturally to be traduced by nostalgia. But the fact remains that the Sandinistas have dragged the country into such a state that many Nicaraguans have even begun to recall the past in favorable terms, in terms that the past does not deserve. In the old days they would complain that progress was too slow. But today progress is not merely nonexistent, it has been replaced by its opposite. The society is moving backward. Before the revolution there was a dictatorship, yes; but there was also a vital, ebullient people, replete with an inexhaustible variety of types, rogues and

virtuosos, thieves and pillars of rectitude, all jostled together in a rich social mix of the sort that characterizes all late medieval societies or their present-day equivalents.

In the old days there was poverty, but at least there were always beans. Even the poor had meat at their tables. It was possible to speak of a national cuisine, of creole specialties that formed part of the collective culture. There were plenty of iguanas, beef, chicken, tortillas; there was always *cosa de horno*. And the subcontinent used to be beneath contempt, as a place where mothers mutilated their children to give them a profession as beggars in the street. In Nicaragua's pure

tropical climes, rich in fertile land and streams and rivers, oceans on both sides, half the country covered with forests, that Asian sort of subpoverty was simply incomprehensible. But even the distinguished Anglo-Indian visitor now finds reflections of it in the land of the Sandinistas.

Of course it was inevitable that Rushdie would have something to say about the Popular Church. It is a standard part of the tourist package that the Sandinistas have prepared for their Western visitors. Rushdie supports his reflections on the subject with an unfortunate article by Conor Cruise O'Brien that appeared last year in the *Atlantic*. O'Brien compared

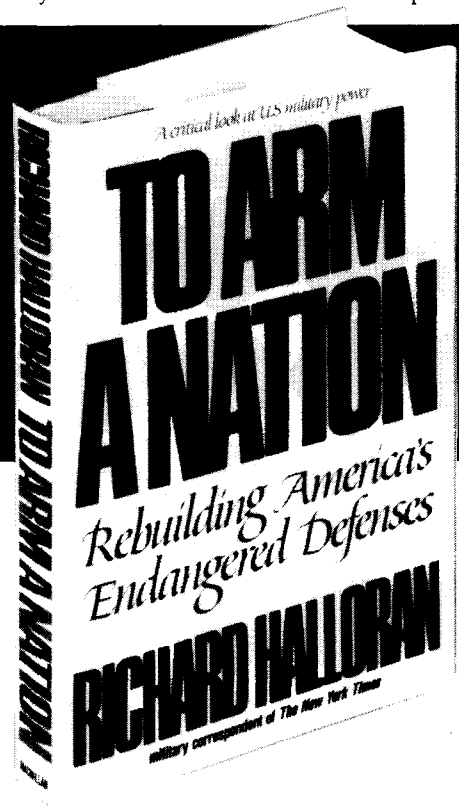
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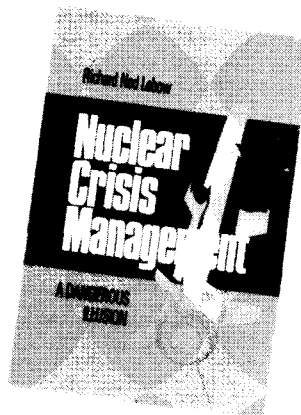
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Managua to Geneva (again, the mythic dimension must always be present, so that foreigners can feel "part of history unfolding"). The Popular Church was represented by lofty, superhuman characters. Nowhere was it noted that this theological movement is in fact merely an extension of the government. O'Brien proposed as a new Mahatma Gandhi the sophisticated (he collects valuable paintings and prize thoroughbred dogs) and hot-tempered (God protect his servants if they lose the bones for his dogs, because they would have to get down on their hands and knees and search for them under the furniture) Miguel d'Escoto, a priest suspended from sacramental functions and now foreign minister. And Ernesto Cardenal, a man of weak character, but with an infinite capacity for self-humiliation and dissembling (the better to provide a show for visiting foreigners), is depicted as an innocent victim of papal fury.

Neither Rushdie nor O'Brien bothered to look very closely at this development of Nicaraguan religion. They adduce, for example, the publications of the Central American Historical Institute, which represents for O'Brien a sort of bible of what is presently happening in Nicaragua; but these are the work, in fact, of a Jesuit who has lost his faith, lacks the courage to honestly hang up his cassock, and now seeks to give some meaning to his frustrated life through politics. The social limitations of the Popular Church are similarly overlooked by these literary tourists. Mario Vargas Llosa has noted more ingenuously of this church that it "lies well beyond the reach of the normal practicing Catholic, and above all, of the Catholic poor; it finds resonance only among intellectual sectors of the middle class, who were already convinced in the first place."

RUSHDIE'S CHAPTER called simply "Doña Violeta's Version" merits a special word. Violeta de Chamorro is the widow of the editor of *La Prensa*, the daily newspaper recently shut down by the regime. Doña Violeta is a public figure. Like all public figures, she may be liked or disliked. Some may not find themselves drawn to this austere widow—naïve, graying, distinguished in her physical manner despite the arthritis that has begun to hobble her frame. Rushdie, not surprisingly, is not one of her sympathizers; she is the sworn enemy of those who have invited him to Nicaragua. But his account of her is more than penni-

cious as politics. It is pernicious as writing. The portrait he presents is simply unrecognizable to anybody who knows her. Rushdie describes an inarticulate woman, incapable even of expounding her own views, much less responding to the views of her adversaries; a woman devoid of any traits, even twisted or reactionary ones, that might give her character some dimension.

In Rushdie's account, Doña Violeta merely repeats the same simplistic arguments that the government (or perhaps the government-appointed interpreter) attributes to her. Rushdie, always intelligent and alert in the discussion of ideas, and with the additional advantage of being able to revise his responses in his writing, naturally comes out ahead in their exchange. But a writer must know how to give some credibility to his characters, even if their words seem vain and superficial, even if they inspire contempt. He must be able to convey their human quality. What we have here, instead, is a cartoon. The writer who has spent an evening in the company of Señora Ortega, with her transparent silk blouses, her heavy makeup, and her pearl necklaces, proceeds to describe Doña Violeta as covered with jewels. Rushdie has scurrilously set her up, in short, as a straw man—actually, a straw woman—to vindicate the hostility of his hosts. (Before this chapter was published in English, it appeared in Spanish in a Guatemalan newspaper, during a recent meeting of the foreign ministers of the European Economic Community and their Central American colleagues. Rushdie's hosts must have been satisfied that his trip was bearing fruit.)

THE JAGUAR SMILE is a bad book, but not because it supports the revolution. If it opposed the revolution, it would not necessarily be a good book. It fails, rather, because of its remarkable superficiality. It offers nothing that might help us to understand the Sandinistas better, nothing that shows the ways in which their revolution was different. There is nothing here about the moving forces behind these revolutionaries, so stunted and hemmed in by their own limitations; about the speed with which political opportunism led them to power virtually overnight; about the provinciality of their ideological vision; about the frisson of sudden international celebrity, which has only fueled still further their innate irresponsibility.

For some, *sandinismo* is like a huge pas-

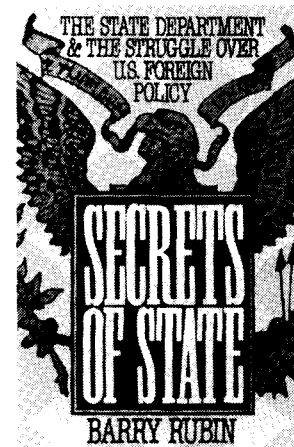
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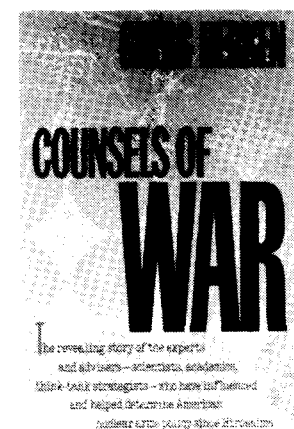


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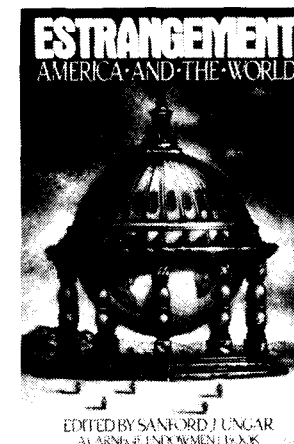
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sion, a love affair the likes of which one experiences but once in a lifetime, a perfect idyll kept alive as long as possible to recall that once one was loved in return. It is difficult to believe in nothing, just as it is difficult never to have been loved. *Sandinismo* gave many honest, thoughtful Nicaraguans an ideal. To renounce it now would be like committing suicide. That is an advantage of the Sandinistas over the *contras*. Some of the *contras* have been fighting for democracy, but they have failed to create an ideal. In *sandinismo* there is no real or theoretical idea of democracy, but there remains the emotional charge that only ideals can provide.

Rushdie's book is harmful in another way too: it gives permanence and legitimacy to an illusion. It lies to the poor and the humble throughout the world who are searching for a means to live in a more just society without having to renounce their individual liberties. In this

way it prejudices the cause of democratic socialism in general. But it will have some measure of success among the left in heart who do not know Nicaragua's realities and aspire to a better world. They will believe in this book because it confirms their convictions, and they will turn away from anyone who gainsays it (or the revolution), just as ardently as some Sandinistas turned away from those who attacked the Cuban revolution, before their own revolution deprived them of their last illusions.

XAVIER ARGUELLO

Xavier Arguello was general secretary of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture in 1979-80 and edited *Nicaraguac*, the official cultural journal of the Sandinistas, from 1980 until 1984, when he resigned in protest against official censorship. He now works for the United Nicaraguan Opposition in Washington, D.C.

A DEMURRAL

The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams
Volume One: 1909-1939

edited by A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan

(New Directions, 544 pp., \$29.95)

Williams is the most embarrassing poet in the language, surpassing even Whitman. Good for him, it may be thought; he gets under our skin, strikes through our genteel subterfuges. But it isn't so. We are not embarrassed by Williams; we are embarrassed *for* him. He doesn't get under our skin; he makes it crawl. The dust jacket to *Al Que Quiere!* (1917) reads:

To Whom It May Concern! This book is a collection of poems by William Carlos Williams. You, gentle reader, will probably not like it, because it is brutally powerful and scornfully crude. Fortunately, neither the author nor the publisher care much whether you like it or not. The author has done his work, and if you *do* read the book you will agree that he doesn't give a damn for your opinion. . . . And we, the publishers, don't much care whether you buy the book or not. It only costs a dollar, so that we can't make much profit out of it. But we have the satisfaction of offering that which will outweigh, in spite of its eighty pages, a dozen volumes of pretty lyrics. We have the profound satisfaction of publishing a book in

which, we venture to predict, the poets of the future will dig for material as the poets of today dig in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

"Brutally powerful and scornfully crude" may or may not seem apt for "The elm is scattering / its little loaves / of sweet smells / from a white sky!" or "Daisies are broken / petals are news of the day." In any case, where may one find a piece of hype that more embarrassingly shoots over or wide of its mark? Such gaucheness was to be typical of Williams first and last. And the fiction is maintained that these are the words of the publisher, not of the author. But can we believe that the author didn't at least approve them? Certainly such shrill bluster comes from Williams himself throughout his career, culminating in what may be the most embarrassing moment in all his work: "I am a poet! I am. I am. I / am a poet, I reaffirmed, ashamed." Ashamed is perhaps what he then was; but if so, unashamed is what he now forces himself to be, like a man who compels himself to strip in pub-

lic, though he hates it. And for us who are present at the performance, observing it, what could be more uncomfortable? We blush for him; we don't know where to look.

This condition is often described (and applauded) as "nakedness"—as if there were nothing to put the rest of us out of countenance when, fully clothed ourselves, we meet a man with no clothes on. ("Off, off you lendings"—is that the idea? Clothes are hypocritical?) Since "naked" obviously means "disarmed," is it therefore disarming? Williams seems to have thought so, and he traded on the idea constantly in verse and prose alike. As late as 1945 he asked: "Why have I divided my lines as I have?" He answered, in a piece meant for public delivery, "I don't know." And sure enough, he never once showed himself aware of the term "enjambment."

IS THIS DISARMING? Or is it not, rather, shameless; that is to say, impudent? Williams's refinement of the ploy comes clear when we realize that he didn't mean to follow "I don't know" with "And I don't care." Not for him that Whitmanesque insouciance. Williams's audience in 1945 was to understand that his ignorance made him anxious; he really cared, and if he couldn't say why he divided his lines as he did, he would go on trying to find out (though he never succeeded). His impudence thus has a special quality, is screwed up another turn. He would present himself as, though ignorant of enjambment, in intention a *poeta doctus*, a learned craftsman. Hence his insistence on that most hallowed and ancient principle, measure—a term that, as Stephen Cushman has shown in *William Carlos Williams and the Meanings of Measure*, was paraded by Williams constantly, yet never had for him any fixed determinate meaning at all.

Yvor Winters decided that Williams was incapable of consecutive thought. This may be right; certainly there is nothing in Williams's discursive prose that suggests otherwise. But Winters missed the point. Muddleheadedness, whether real or pretended, innate or acquired, was the strongest card in Williams's hand. At the start of his career Ezra Pound amiably told him as much. And although Williams resented Pound's condescension both then and later, he was shrewd enough not to discount Pound's judgment and advice: there was room for a dumb ox in Ameri-

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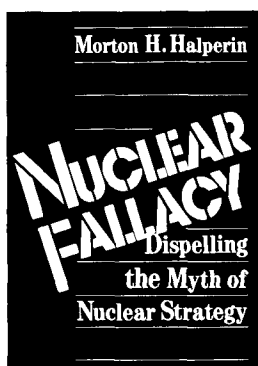
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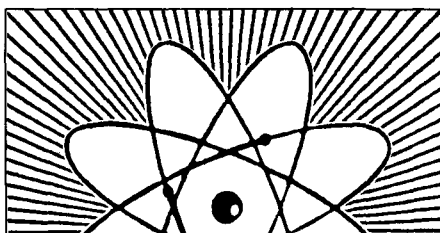
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can poetry, and if only Williams was patient and played his cards right, the place was his for the taking.

Like other predictions by Pound, this one was borne out; and for 30 years now Williams has been accorded the adulation and affection that the intelligentsia reserves for its dumb oxen. The dumbness is, and perhaps is meant to be, disarming. Critics at any rate find it lovable. Winters himself, notoriously the hardest of all critics to disarm, did not escape the trap. Though he changed his mind about Williams and grew steadily more grumpy about him as his star rose, Winters, proudly and professedly the scourge of anti-intellectualism, made especially indulgent concessions to the anti-intellectualism of Williams. (At the end of his life he tried to clear this up with a sentence that is entertaining, but too clever by half: "He is not even an anti-intellectual poet in any intelligible sense of the term, for he did not know what the intellect is.") Robert Lowell testified that for his generation it was Winters's praise of Williams that at a crucial time tipped the balance in Williams's favor.

Williams's best poem, Winters thought, was "By the road to the contagious hospital." And if, with A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan, we leave off reading Williams at midcareer in 1939, this choice seems reasonable:

By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields
brown with dried weeds, standing and
fallen

patches of standing water
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance—Still, the profound change
has come upon them: rooted, they
grip down and begin to awaken

One good reason for preferring this to other Williams poems is that it is by his standards quite densely punctuated. All the same, the punctuation is manifestly both sparse and inconsistent—as it has to be if he is to continue to seem, as he must, incapable of consecutive thought. For full and consistent punctuation would testify to an ordering clarity that Williams, as a dumb ox, must seem to be innocent of. The fuzz that indeterminate grammatical relations thus install at the poem's center is—and how can we be surprised?—thickened by the diction: not "red" but "reddish," not "purple" but "purplish," not "twig-like" but "twiggy."

To be sure, "twig-like" is not in the lexicon of that American spoken by Polish mothers that Williams once declared to be his chosen linguistic medium; but then, would Polish mothers personify spring by describing it/her as "dazed"? It is the observer who is dazed, and so are we if we go along with him, registering only approximate colors, approximate shapes. And rightly so; the time of year that is being registered is a betwixt-and-between season, when the fuzz in our perceptions corresponds to the fuzz that we see, or think we see, on branches about to bud. And so we find a deeper reason for thinking this poem pre-eminent: for once, the chosen subject calls for and responds to, adventitiously perhaps but very happily, the style's characteristic preference for approximation over exactness, daze over definition.

POETS' PUNCTUATION is seldom attended to. In Williams's work it is more than usually revealing. For as late as *Sour Grapes* (1921), probably his best collection, Williams had shown himself ready and able to punctuate conventionally and correctly. Moreover, in lovely poems such as "To Waken an Old Lady" and "The Widow's Lament in Springtime," he had expertly and with feeling played off the pauses of punctuation stops against the pauses enforced by line-endings. This is, so some will think, damning evidence that the disorderliness of Williams's mind was not innate but acquired, or at least sedulously cultivated, perhaps in obedience to Pound's rash and in effect cynical advice that disorder, clumsiness with concepts, and slow muddle would be Williams's strong suit.

Two years after *Sour Grapes*, Williams, in the inchoate prose of *Spring and All*, was already declaring himself—with pride? certainly without shame—a

muddlehead: "Being of a slow but accurate understanding, I have not always been able to complete the intellectual steps which would make me firm in the position." At the same time he begins to grind his teeth at anyone who calls a poem "lovely." The loveliness of "To Waken an Old Lady" is out of keeping with what he invokes without irony as "the modern trend"; and Williams, still trying to be "brutally powerful and scornfully crude," dismantles all the resources, among them conventionally correct and sensitive punctuation, that had made "To Waken an Old Lady" possible. The feelingful and delicate lyricist is possessed of higher ambitions—ambitions that would eventuate in the would-be epic *Paterson*, which the volume before us mercifully exempts us from contemplating. In the process, the poems would cease to be lovely or lovable to just the extent that their author would, in the minds of his admirers, become both.

"By the road to the contagious hospital" stands first in the very elaborate though wayward structure that Williams erected in 1923 under the title *Spring and All*. And we have to ask if we take the full force of the poem when we remove it from that context. The question is very difficult, if not impossible, to answer. The reason for this is the peculiar nature of the original *Spring and All*. The folksily expansive or inclusive "and all" may be thought to give the game away from the start—or, more precisely, to wrap up the game before it has started. For the phrase asserts the author's right to the broad and fuzzy margin of approximations that indeed seems to have enveloped Williams's every enterprise—as it had to, if he was to preserve his invaluable persona of the earnestly well-meaning muddlehead.

OVER THE YEARS the muddle became so elaborate that now we can't even say what *Spring and All* is, what it consists of. Mostly we understand by the title a sequence of 27 or 28 poems, every one of which, however, appeared independently as publishing occasions offered, thus suggesting that the *Spring and All* context was no more than a temporary convenience anyhow. Moreover, on its first appearance in 1923 *Spring and All* had the format of many pages of discontinuous, hectic, and obscurely polemical prose, out of which the poems rose at irregular intervals like so many knobby outcrops from a sea of lava.

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That lava, cooled into a pumice of barely grammatical prose, protested its volcanic origins by the most sophomoric inventions of the 1920s international avant-garde: "Chapter XIII" was preceded by "Chapter 19" and followed by "Chapter VI," which in turn led to "Chapter 2" (five sentences). Shock tactics, this used to be called, or *épater le bourgeois*. (In those heady days the bourgeois was supposed still to exist, though in precipitate retreat before, as Williams put it, "the social, energized class—ebullient now in Russia.") The prose passages of *Spring and All*, now restored by Litz and MacGowan, certainly constitute a period piece, and supply the wan pleasure that period pieces can provide. What they add to "By the road to the contagious hospital" is the perception (which we might or might not have guessed) that "spring" in that poem is, though literal, also a metaphor for the historical period in which the author conceived himself to be writing.

Certainly some of the other poems profit from being returned to their original context. One such is "The Red Wheelbarrow," which by now has surely bored everyone to tears; it is better when returned to the sequence than as

the trivial and self-preening squib that, considered in isolation, has received so much grave and reverent attention from so many critics. But the best poems—XVIII, "The pure products of America/go crazy," and XIX, "This is the time of year"—soar quite free of *Spring and All*. In gratitude to Litz and MacGowan I must name also XIV, "Of death/the barber," unnoticed by me in the past, which, if I'm allowed to punctuate it (and who shall stop me?), I can find both witty and tender.

DECORUM WHISPERS into one ear, and prudence into the other, that it is high time for a paragraph beginning "And yet . . ." If I had a third ear, there would be heard in it the hurt and protesting voices of several friends, including undoubtedly James Laughlin, who as publisher has crowned many years of devoted service to Williams by commissioning this handsome and reasonably priced edition. And yet . . . "And yet he is a great poet." I am quite sure, as Winters was, that Williams is nothing of the kind. Still, having named three or four poems that I am grateful for, I could without much trouble specify a dozen more. That would be graceful.

But it would slide away from the troublesome question of how we have come to devalue the notion of greatness in poetry, and perhaps of poetry itself, when the label "great poet" is affixed to Williams, as it customarily is. Despite the fervent and frequent and of course embarrassing assertions by Williams about poetry's supreme status, his practice and his belated reputation have debased the dignity of the poet's calling.

Very well, talk of ploy and stratagem is spiteful and tendentious. Very well, Williams probably wasn't consciously a con artist. Let's grant for the sake of argument that he was genuinely as simple-minded and as muddled-minded as he seemed. The fact remains that the man who resented being patronized by Pound got himself into the situation of being patronized by everyone else. For that is what recognition, when it belatedly came to Williams, amounted to: not respect, not esteem, but alas *love*—the condescending love of powerful minds for a weak one. It hardly required much power of mind to see that "the variable foot" is a laughable contradiction in terms; or that "No ideas but in things," the slogan that Williams was so proud of, represents a consummation devoutly not to be wished, supposing it to be possible (as fortunately it isn't). As Octavio Paz gently recalled, "His conversation induced you to love him rather than admire him."

As for Williams's loveliness, consider a piece often recalled with chuckling affection, "This Is Just To Say":

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox
and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast
Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold.

The word for this, the *only* word for this, is "cute." Technically, if we must break a butterfly on a wheel, this little squib is like that other squib "The Red Wheelbarrow": in each case, the expanses of white page around the printed words enforce (visually, for Williams had a pictorial, not an auditory, sensibility) a hushed portentousness that the words in themselves, whatever the tricksiness of spacing and lineation, do nothing to earn. This apparently (and really) trivial

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item must have significance, else why is the statement of it framed with so much white paper? The maneuver is just that simple. And of course significance is claimed not just for the goodness of plums but for the ritual of raiding the icebox, and for the wrist-slapping, smiling low tension between modestly affluent man and wife. No wonder we all feel cozy with it—until we remember that such coziness is hardly the effect aimed at or attained by poets of the past whom Williams on occasion measured himself against.

Williams, unaware apparently that in such a poem he had underwritten the suburban lifestyle, would in his next collection, *An Early Martyr* (1935)—

which includes "The Yachts"—display a bleeding heart on behalf of the victimized and dispossessed proletariat. His heart was in the right place—on his sleeve; where his head was, it is as usual impossible to say. A poet who was, or pretended to be, mindless—is this the effigy we are to hang our garlands on? If we persist in doing so, the consequences may be far-reaching, and not just for poetry.

DONALD DAVIE

Donald Davie teaches at Vanderbilt University. His latest book is *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of the Lyric* (University of Tennessee Press).

THE TRACKS OF TERROR

The American Connection:
U.S. Guns, Money, and Influence in Northern Ireland
by Jack Holland

(Viking, 272 pp., \$19.95)

Two rather startling claims animate this otherwise uneven and ordinary account of the relationship between Irish-American "guns, money, and influence" and the frequently explosive history of Northern Ireland. One is believably presented and apparently true; the other is not.

In the first instance, Jack Holland would have his readers believe that since the early 1950s, the principal source of munitions for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (and its precursors) has been one ascetic and unfamous individual, an Irish-born resident of Brooklyn, now 72 years old, named George Harrison. This aging "revolutionary," committed to the creation of an "Irish socialist republic," has been, says Holland, "the IRA's principal source of arms for almost 30 years." Accordingly—this is the book's second major premise—all of the better-known Irish-American personalities and organizations, including most specifically the infamous Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAI), which has been obliged by American courts to register formally with the Department of Justice as a foreign agent of the Provisional IRA, have nothing to do with gunrunning.

It may come as something of a relief to many observers, this news that all the fuss about American support for violence in Ulster over the years has been mainly about one aging Irish bachelor, who spent 36 years working as a security guard for Brinks during the day while quietly rounding up guns and ammo at night and on weekends. But this is the true part of Holland's story. Never mind that the tale (not the book) is as riveting and exciting as any thriller by Robert Ludlum or John Le Carré: "the Emissary" arrives from Ireland from time to time with a shopping list, each time wanting more sophisticated, more powerful weaponry; guns are smuggled out of Camp Lejeune in North Carolina by young Marines looking for walking-around money, or are stolen by the Mafia from a National Guard armory near Boston; stored in garages and basements around New York City, the guns are taken by merchant seamen, a few at a time and by indirect routes, to Ireland; bumbling federal agents sip tea in our man's parlor while \$50,000 worth of rifles and ammunition sits stacked in an adjacent room; \$17,000 in cash is tucked in a plain white envelope and carried to the big buy in a blue nylon gym bag; there are

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charges of double-dealing by the CIA; murder aplenty. Best-selling paperback fiction. Only this is true stuff, and real people have been killed, thanks to the life's work of this American connection.

Born in 1915, George Harrison spent his boyhood in County Mayo, learning marksmanship and politics from the unreconciled rebels who had lost the Irish Civil War to the Dublin government (after independence from Britain was won for most, but significantly not all, of Ireland in 1921). Like many contemporaries, Harrison eventually immigrated to the United States, joined the U.S. Army during the Second World War, and afterward settled in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn. Unlike most of the Irish in America, however, Harrison retained and refined his socialist politics. He is a staunch supporter of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, and a regular participant at rallies and public demonstrations for leftist international causes, such as independence for Puerto Rico. "The struggle in Ireland," Holland quotes him as saying, "is part of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle which is going on all over the world, as is the struggle against fascism, which is the offspring of imperialism."

One of Harrison's early neighbors in Park Slope was George De Meo, an entrepreneur of Corsican descent. Proprietor of a suburban gun store, and purveyor of munitions to Cuban rebels in the 1950s, De Meo lived, by his own admission, "on the fringes of the Mafia." He would become Harrison's principal source of armaments over the next 35 years. The equipment they furnished for the IRA's "border war" in the late 1950s

reads like an NRA Christmas catalog for World War II buffs: German-made Schmeisser submachine guns and P.38s, Thompson submachine guns, Colt .45s, ammunition. Although scores of people were killed in this campaign, mainly policemen and security guards at Northern Ireland's isolated outposts along the frontier with the Irish Republic, the political consequences of the mayhem were minor, and the campaign petered out.

Harrison was inactive for a time, until the movement was revived after 1969 by the disintegration of the Northern Ireland state and the subsequent emergence of the Provisional IRA (when the "Official" IRA renounced the armed struggle and went into legitimate politics as the Worker's Party). The most highly prized items in the 1970s were M-16s, the standard infantry rifle of the U.S. Army; the Armalite, a semiautomatic version of the M-16 that soon became the Provos' favorite; the M-60, a portable machine gun capable of bringing down a helicopter or small plane in flight, which sold for about \$1,000 on the American black market; and Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifles. In addition to frequent and detailed recitals of how many M-16s or AK-47s were transported on which dates, and for what price, Holland also describes, in sometimes grisly detail, how a number of the weapons were eventually deployed.

The author has obviously been able to pull together many strands of a complex and murky international story. Throughout this period, however, neither American, nor British, nor Irish law enforcement agencies knew of Harrison's role in this deadly drama, though they had almost stumbled onto his operation more than once. Holland recounts an occasion in 1975 when Harrison had just moved one of the largest consignments he had ever purchased—about 200 rifles and 150,000 rounds of ammunition—into a small room in his house on East Ninth Street. Two agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms appeared at Harrison's door to deliver a subpoena requiring him to appear before a grand jury in Concord, New Hampshire. It seemed that there was an inquiry under way into illegal arms trafficking in that state, and a check made out to a New

Hampshire gun store had been traced to Harrison. He served the agents tea, and said that he would appear with his lawyer before the grand jury. When the tea was finished, the agents bade farewell and walked out, unaware of the stack of arms and ammunition in the next room. Harrison later appeared before the grand jury and declined to answer 30 out of the 32 questions they asked him. (He gave his name and address.) He was not recalled; no indictments were brought against him.

NOT UNTIL 1980, when George De Meo was arrested and convicted on arms smuggling charges, did authorities learn that George Harrison had been the IRA's principal American purchasing agent. In return for a lighter sentence for himself, De Meo recorded conversations with Harrison, and in early 1981 he introduced him to an FBI agent posing as an arms dealer. Harrison told the agent he could lay his hands on \$50,000 in short order and was in the market for almost any weapon that could be furnished.

When the sting unfolded a short time later, Harrison arranged to buy (Holland reproduces the finest details) 12 AK-47s, one Israeli-made Uzi submachine gun, and 47 MAC-10 machine pistols. On the night before the sale would take place, Harrison made a phone call (recorded by an FBI tap on his line) to "Michael." He said that "tomorrow night" he would stop by "the house" and that he needed more money than they'd previously agreed, "over the stated amount, you know, if possible . . ." On that next night, June 19, 1981, Harrison visited the home of Michael Flannery, NORAIID's leading citizen, and walked out with an envelope containing \$17,000 in \$100 bills. Two hours later, Harrison handed all but one of the bills to FBI agent John Winslow when he delivered the promised goods. When Harrison's home was searched the next day, after his arrest, one item discovered was the Irish passport of an apparent houseguest, Joe Cahill, then Belfast commander of the Provisional IRA—and one of the men who had urged Michael Flannery and others to create NORAIID back in 1970.

Almost unbelievably, however, Harrison and Flannery and three confederates were acquitted by a Brooklyn jury the following year. They presented a defense that has since become quite popular for arms merchants caught in the act: that George De Meo was a CIA agent, that they thought they had been work-

ONCE REMOVED

Like a first cousin once removed, I stand inside my house, a stranger who can't feel the ordinary things, thinking what's real is elsewhere, too busy for my hand to touch the pulse of coffee cups, the bland heart of folded laundry, the veins that wheel in silence under polished wood, the reel of arteries under the floors. Understand, once I knew how. So now, clumsy, fumbling, I make one more remove—not from, but in—in and down to what I have to know, to try to touch the center of the thing, work my stiff fingers, feeling through the thin old surfaces to the anchored life below.

CATHY STERN

ing for the CIA. The prosecution failed to prove that he was not a CIA agent (the defense persuaded the jury that De Meo would be obliged to deny the fact if it were true, which he thereupon did). Holland does not mention a 1984 PBS documentary called "The Old Man and the Gun"—in which Flannery, in the title role, only chuckles when asked about the basis for the "CIA defense." But he dryly acknowledges the preposterous nature of the claim:

There might well be doubts about the accuracy of this portrayal of De Meo's role as painted by the defense. But there can be no doubt that with the arrest of Harrison, his gunrunning career ended and the IRA's most vital source of weapons was blocked.

THROUGHOUT his book Holland is unduly circumspect about the role of NORAID. He states vaguely that there is "persuasive evidence that NORAID has little direct connection with arms acquisition," forgetting at this point what he has written elsewhere in the book about the events of June 19, 1981—when NORAID's Flannery provided the cash for an arms purchase by a man who apparently had a Provo military commander staying in his home. He also fails to find any link between NORAID and the Provisional IRA in his own discussion of a weekly New York paper, *The Irish People*: "Though it is not in any sense owned or run by NORAID, it is edited by NORAID's publicity director, and its policies generally support those of both the IRA and the committee [NORAID]."

Holland never quite asks, let alone answers, the most interesting questions relating to this subject. If NORAID does not finance at least some of the IRA's arms purchases in this country, then: (a) who does? and (b) on what is NORAID money spent?

Since its founding in 1970 at the behest of two emissaries from the Provisional IRA, NORAID has altered its public pronouncements to establish some formal distance between itself and the Provos. But it has never provided a credible, comprehensive account of where the money it collects *does* go. Perhaps most significantly, those who donate money to NORAID do so in the considered belief that NORAID is, in fact, acting on behalf of the Provisional IRA. No one, Irish-American or otherwise, who wants to help the impoverished or disenfranchised denizens of Ulster without having the money end up in the hands of the IRA, would give a dollar to NORAID.

There are too many church funds and private foundations that provide more credible accountings of how and where their money is disbursed.

Yet on this critical point Holland is content simply to quote "a written statement to this author" in which George Harrison denies any connection to Flannery and NORAID. A book on "U.S. guns, money, and influence in Northern Ireland" really ought to do better, particularly when the writer is so well able to undertake a more enterprising investigation. Belfast-born Jack Holland has lived among the New York Irish since his arrival in this country in 1979. For most

of that time, he has written a well-informed and provocative column for the weekly *Irish Echo* (an important local forum for the metropolitan-area Irish community). He has therefore enjoyed friendly access to many of the players featured in the book. (George Harrison is thanked on the acknowledgments page "for his unfailing cooperation.")

Some of the writing in *The American Connection* is quite good, and some of Holland's insights on secondary matters are exactly correct. ("After 18 years in Congress," a certain New York representative "is an old hand at phrasing things in a manner that enables people on op-

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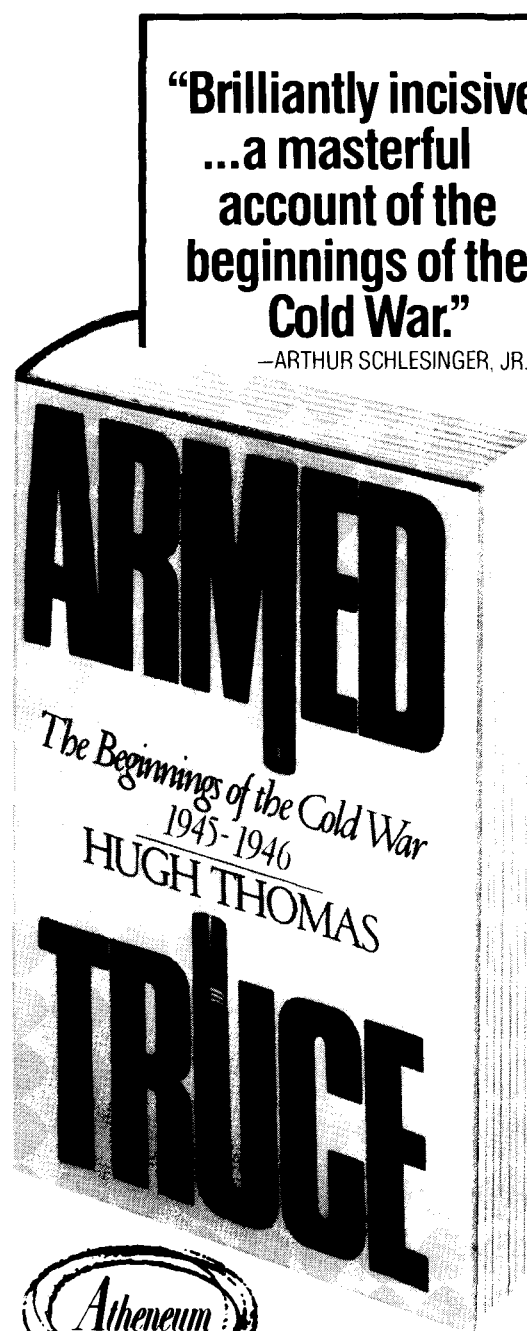
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posite sides of any argument to think he supports them.") But on almost every score, at the end of the day, he has done only half a day's work. His chapter on American press coverage of Northern Ireland, for instance, rightly notes that most news media in this country do a disservice to consumers and subjects alike by passing around sappy tales about "the inexplicable Irish," instead of providing informed reporting on complex and deadly serious issues. But Holland complains that this is due to the villainous British Information Service, which has fed tame news-hounds tasty but false bits of half-cooked truths. He complains that in the course of the 1970s the Brits' portrait

was touched up somewhat by the rising concern over "international terrorism"; into the picture was dutifully painted various "links" [between the IRA and] other equally anathematized groups and individuals, such as the Palestine Liberation Organization and Colonel Qaddafi of Libya.

As if these links did not in fact exist. Elsewhere in the book, Holland plays down the loss of the George Harrison network by noting:

The IRA has other sources. One is Libya. . . . In March 1973, the Irish police halted a fishing vessel, the *Claudia*, off the Irish coast, and found Joe Cahill on board with five tons of Libyan arms.

Before ABC News and the *New York Times* take Ireland more seriously, writers as knowledgeable as Jack Holland will have to demonstrate that straightforward and unbiased reporting is possible. *The American Connection* does not. And a more significant shortcoming also needs to be noted. Holland fails to make clear just how far afield is the community of Irish-Americans on whom the book turns. "The American connection" is in real life far more slender a thread than the casual reader of this book might appreciate. This reflects not lack of interest by the Irish in the ancestral homeland, but deference to the sensibilities of the kinsmen who live there now. Support for the Provisional IRA among the Irish in America is marginal. In Ireland, it is minuscule.

In the general election of February 17, 1987, in the Republic of Ireland, the Provos' political front, Sinn Fein (Irish for "ourselves alone"), received just 1.9 percent of the vote. It failed to win a single place in the 166-seat Parliament. And in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein is supported electorally by just a third of the minority Catholic nationalist community. Two-

thirds vote for the Social Democratic and Labor Party (which Holland mentions only in passing). In elections for the British Parliament in 1986, in the four districts in which both parties fielded candidates, the SDLP won 64.6 percent of the Catholic vote (to 35.4 for Sinn Fein) and 33.9 percent of the total vote (to 18.7 for Sinn Fein). In the classic manner of a Marxist "vanguard" party, then, the IRA and Sinn Fein are waging a revolutionary struggle on behalf of a people that does not want war waged in its name. For more than 60 years, the Irish have clearly preferred the rough and tumble of electoral politics.

Most Irish-Americans have respected this reality for some time. Yet Holland treats it as a recent development, as though it were another unfortunate consequence of the Reagan presidency (as in "more and more Irish-Americans are voting Republican"). This does not begin to explain the disdain in which the Irish-American community holds the IRA and its handful of supporters in this country. When Michael Flannery was selected as grand marshal of the 1983 New York St. Patrick's Day parade, such prominently Democratic

(and Irish) personalities as Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Edward M. Kennedy and former Governor Hugh Carey—emphatically supported by Irish diplomats in this country—boycotted the parade. The Catholic archbishop of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Irish-American Terence Cardinal Cooke, declined to give his traditional blessing to the parade. Moreover, in a gesture recalling the glory days of the secular Church, Cooke ordered the massive door of the cathedral kept closed until Flannery passed by at the head of the parade.

Many New Yorkers missed the point of these dramatic statements. Italian, Jewish, and black politicians marched in the parade, seeming not to know or to care that their Irish colleagues were absent. But the astute observer, then as now, will be aware that the American connection of which Holland writes is something very distant from the main substance of Irish-American life.

THOMAS O. MELIA

Thomas O. Melia is a regular contributor to the monthly *Boston Irish News*.

BUILDER AND STACKER

The Society of Mind by Marvin Minsky

(Simon and Schuster, 339 pp., \$19.95)

Marvin Minsky has been at the center of artificial intelligence research almost since the inception of the idea, having been a professor of electrical engineering at MIT for a quarter century. Men of his innovative and paradigm-generating cohort have largely renounced the expectation that classical digital computers (in themselves, and as at present realized) have much to teach us about our minds. Minsky will not disabuse anyone of that idea. But he and his colleagues have gone off in interesting ways, and Minsky wants to tell us about these ways, not as discoveries but as speculations, as "an adventure story for the imagination." He wishes to illustrate the subtlety and the complexity of the simulations of humanity that he and his colleagues are aiming at.

Minsky's book is made up of 262 remarks, each allotted a page of its own. It looks from afar like a field manual for beginners, replete with simple diagrams. The title tells the theme: a mind is a society of agents. To ward off confusion, Minsky reserves the term "community" for real people. His agents are not people at all—that is the point of them—and the society they form is not a society at all, but a metaphor for one. How does this metaphor for the organization of the mind work? Anthropologists, of course, tell of a vast variety of social organizations (and may resent being robbed of "society" and left with the unstructured "community"). But Minsky regularly refers to only one kind of social organization: a bureaucracy. He unflinchingly exploits the metaphor, with repeated

talk of executives and middle managers; they are his agents in the society of mind.

This not-so-unusual idea arose for Minsky when he and Seymour Papert labored long to build a machine that plays with building blocks, making towers and knocking them down. Why such a machine? Papert had spent several years with Jean Piaget's group in Geneva, famed for its studies of how children acquire abilities as they mature. Papert and Minsky wanted to start near the beginning. One of the first playlike tasks assigned to Western infants, especially boys, is playing with blocks. Constructing a tower could well be one of the first hard-object problems to which a contemporary child is directed.

What does a creature need to be able to build towers from scattered blocks? Perhaps only two abilities: recognizing and stacking. A robot of the kind now common in manufacturing needs little more, because blocks and only blocks come down the assembly line. They appear neatly aligned, and the well-tuned robot can do nothing much except neatly pile the recognized blocks. A child, on the other hand, is surrounded by blocks helter-skelter, as well as by soft toys, balls, crib legs, and a kitten. Moreover, a child can do a great deal of inapposite things with a block, such as laying it akimbo. A child might try to extract the block from the bottom of a small tower and put it on top. Thus, what we casually and unreflectively call eye-hand coordination and motor control must be part of a curiously complex structure. Minsky and Papert could not simulate it by building one electro-mechanical system. What they needed was a lot of interacting systems. And in that way the society metaphor for the mind was born.

THE PHYSICAL structure of their machine is unimportant. What matters is the organization of its systems. Their model is a hierarchy of agents, which can be represented as the downward branching roots of a tree. Each agent does nothing but manage the switches of the agents below it. The digital on/off computer idea is pervasive. Agents lower down do nothing but activate switches for even lower agents. Thus the agent Builder may have below it the agent Add (a block to the tower), branched below which are Find (a block), Get (it), and Put (it). Beneath Put are Move (the block) and Release (it).

That may sound much like placing lit-

tle men inside little men. Not at all. Minsky's project is the old-fashioned atomistic one. He wants to understand a whole in terms of parts that can be understood, and in terms of how they are put together. He distinguishes what he calls an "agent" from an "agency." An agent is just a switch. But an agency activates other agents. We can observe what is done by an agent together with all the agents beneath it. Builder, as agent, is a switch for other agents directly beneath it. But "seen from outside, as an agency, Builder does whatever all its subagents accomplish, using one another's help." It stacks blocks.

When Minsky and Papert construct a machine that builds towers (and perhaps other kinds of edifices, such as arches and pyramids) they look at Builder as agency. When they take it apart, however, they find no minibuilders inside. They find a switch that controls other switches. Now of course the machine's creators know how their creation works. But we, coming upon the scene, might be amazed at this animated toy (which is too simple, of course, to have a soul, an *animus*). We discover the switches, or agents, whose collective action produces the agency. In this way the agency, the animated being, has been explained. (I forget who switches Builder on, or plugs it into the wall.) And the explanation of this animated being is in terms of parts that are mere switches, not animated at all.

IT IS Minsky's great merit that he is clear about how he would understand the mind in terms of its parts. Many readers will feel that an artificial intelligence of this kind must leave a lot out. And it does: I've barely arrived at remark six out of 262. But let us, even at this early point in the argument, use Leibniz to speak for the skeptic. Leibniz was almost the first man to build several successful computing machines:

Suppose that there was a machine whose structure could think, feel, and have perception; one could then imagine this to be enlarged, keeping the same proportions, so that one could walk into it like a windmill. One would find only the parts that moved on another, and nothing to explain a perception.

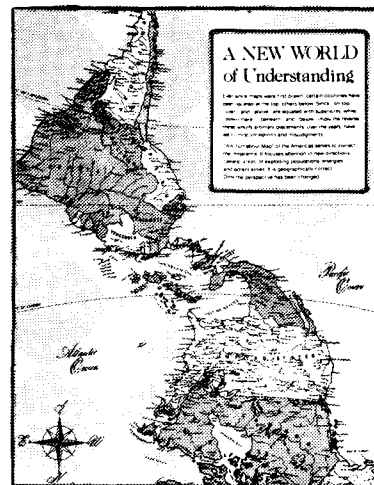
Or a feeling, or a thought. (In Leibniz's time, by the way, a windmill could lift, sort, and grind the farmer's grain, separate the bran and sort the grades of flour, sack, store, and later lower the finished products into the baker's wagon below:

an agency several cuts above Builder, but with a miller inside.)

It is largely irrelevant, except in terms of scale, that Minsky's agents are electronic, not mechanical. He would retort to Leibniz that there is simply nothing more to say about the windmill brain, other than to describe its parts and how they interact. Minsky knows that a color discriminator that accurately answers questions of the form, "What color is this?" does not perceive colors. This is easily explained. First, this agency is unconnected to the vast range of other agencies that involve human interaction with colors. Secondly, any talk of perception must require the creature or the machine to perceive many qualities and relations. The simple color discriminator does not lack some mysterious something, "perception." It is just too simple.

Whether we side with Leibniz or Minsky, what next? We could complicate Builder in a childlike way. Add Wrecker, who wants to knock towers down. And add a higher level agent that controls these two, Play-With-Blocks. The latter in turn may compete with Play-With-Dolls and Play-With-Kitten, all governed by a superior agent, Play. But such a complication is only tedious.

Corrective perspective



RUN-OF-THE-MILL maps place the U.S. above. Since "upper" is equated with "superior," this has bred misconceptions and mischief. The Turnabout Map of the Americas offers a corrective perspective.

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It yields nothing more than the idea that conflict resolution requires more agents, together with a typically bureaucratic "Principle" that supervisory agents become ineffective if their subordinates are too tied up in internal conflict. Minsky uses precisely such bureaucratic words, even down to talking of an agent being "dismissed."

Happily Minsky turns to other aspects of behavior. Another example also comes from Papert's service in Geneva. Show a person a squat wide glass and a tall thin one, both cylinders, and filled with equal amounts of orange juice. Piaget noted that children (and many unsuspecting adults) judge that the tall glass has more juice. Adults seeing the contents of one glass being poured into another without spillage know, in contrast, that the second contains as much as the first. But small enough children still tend to think that the tall glass has more juice than the fat one. As they mature, they overcome this mistake.

What sort of maturation is this? Is it a case of learning new knowledge or skills, to be represented as more agents stretched out horizontally, as it were, on the same level as those already there? No, said Papert. We could introduce an entirely new level that enables old agents to be used more effectively. Some maturation may increase the vertical levels of command over pre-existing agents. So the same agent is at the top of the hierarchy (More, Minsky calls it), but we have a better agency, or Society-of-More. Of course Minsky knows that growing up is not simply a matter of a computer scientist or an engineer inserting a new layer of agents into a diagram. Minsky asks what a quasi-biological correlate would be like. The brain could grow new nerve cells between those of the agent More and those of the agent Tall. But suppose that there was not enough room? Then the new agents would have to grow elsewhere, connected by bundles of communicating cells. Minsky allows himself his only appendix to speculate on the neurobiology involved. And he readily grants that we know absolutely nothing about how a child learns to have Builder or a Society-of-More among its parts.

SO FAR I've referred to nothing past remark 81. There are still 181 to go. In books of this sort the remarks get more and more interesting the further one goes through space, memory, meaning. Minsky includes an esoteric se-

quence of 27 remarks on a subject of which he was one of several simultaneous originators: "frames," or in his version, "default frames." The topic embraces a great deal, from the speed of thought to learning languages. There are also philosophical excursions into, for example, the question of free will ("We're virtually forced to maintain that belief, even though we know it's false"). There are rebuttals of those who can't bear to think that people are machines, chiefly along the lines of hoping that the book will enable them to entertain "the thought of how wonderful it is to be machines with such marvelous powers." There are attempts to assuage the worry that the basic model makes the agents of the mind into mutually aggressive agencies; Minsky contends cooperation becomes increasingly essential as the machine becomes more complex.

Finally Minsky gladly accepts the implication that we have multiple selves. A reader might wonder what has happened to the unity of the self. Well, there is none: "*The idea of a single, central Self doesn't explain anything. This is because a thing with no parts provides nothing that we can use as pieces of explanation.*" The banality of these arguments, and of jolly non sequiturs such as the last (the italics and exclamation mark are Minsky's) should not make us condescend toward the philosophy expressed. Even banality can help at times. Minsky (like myself) has no use for a necessarily unified self. But confront him with the split-brain folks who argue for the existence of two kinds of mind, from the effects of separating the two brain hemispheres, and he throws up his hands and shouts, "It seems to me that some psychologists went mad—and tried to match those differences [between hemispheres] to every mentalistic two-part theory that ever was conceived."

BUT WHAT is the central idea of *The Society of Mind*? "Our oldest ideas have advantages over those that come later," observes Minsky. Quite so. Multiple selves in competition, needing an agent to control them: the idea is as old as Socrates. Aristotle used branching trees of different skills and abilities to model theoretical and practical reasoning. (To check this I pulled a copy of Aristotle from the shelf and found that the original owner, a student at New College, Oxford, about 1890, had drawn on the page I sought a fine Minsky-tree of mental agencies, all neatly labeled in Greek.) But Aristotle

was discussing only how certain human capacities are necessary components of higher virtues. The novelty of Minsky's theory is the attempt to understand the person, as agency, in terms of agents that are different in kind from the agency, mere switches controlling lesser agents.

Minsky's Society of Mind, which he compares to a bureaucracy, is even more like a well-knit fighting unit. Minsky's society (to use an old-fashioned comparison) is much like what the secretary of the Navy would hope for on his best-run battleship. There are clear orders of command, fraternal competition between units, defined goals, all reaching right down to the lowliest sailor, who in real life complains often enough of being depersonalized in the service, of simply being switched on and off. Maybe that is how human beings must model the mind.

STILL, it is worth pausing a moment to consider what made artificial intelligence possible. Please don't jump to conclusions; I'm not about to embark on a conspiracy theory of theories about the mind. But two historical observations are in order. In Minsky's typical case, the Information Processing Technology Office, funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, in grants administered by a man in the Office of Naval Research, provided most of the support. The support continues. You need only to have seen the *New York Times Magazine* of December 7 to find Marvin Minsky's photo in a story about his young student Danny Hillis. DARPA gave his company, Thinking Machines, Inc., \$4.7 million in start-up seed money. Minsky is now a research fellow there. Thinking Machines is attempting to solve the problem of an entirely new kind of computer—not a bigger computer, but one using lots of simple computers that can communicate with each other. A majority of great leaps forward, of which this could conceivably be one, have been funded by the military.

A second observation takes us further back, to World War II. Many of the members of the generation just ahead of Minsky, who brought artificial intelligence into being, worked for outfits with very practical aims, such as the Electro-Acoustic Laboratory and the Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory (along with more familiar groups such as Bell Labs and the MIT Lincoln Lab). EAL and PAL had many practical payoffs, such as the invention of fiberglass (it was devised to

be a sound insulator in aircraft) and exceptional earplugs.

Their first problem was that the sheer noise of planes and explosions meant that a fighting unit could not respond quickly enough. Information and commands were destroyed by roars and bangs. Some who worked here (such as George Miller, a key figure in the "cognitive revolution" in psychology, and one of Minsky's early mentors, for whom Minsky made a multiagent learning machine briefly described in the book) combined these practical concerns with the more theoretical side of information theory stemming from Norbert Wiener and Claude Shannon. Their attention turned from literal noise to problems of information, control, and very rapid communication in the "combat information centers" of battleships and aircraft carriers threatened by sudden kamikaze attacks. Thus the abstract theory of information and the practical problem of communication were united with an urgency hitherto unknown. And this provided a way to think about networks of hierarchical communicating agents that has, to put it mildly, stayed with us.

Nobody in the Office of Naval Re-

search had the thought, "Let's spend megabucks for 40 years so we can establish that the mind of a child is like a fighting ship." If anyone had, all these iconoclastic and exceptionally original researchers would immediately have done something else. But we may pause for a moment to wonder, again, whether the structure of the human mind presented by Minsky has not been highly determined by the environment that funds research. There is a certain ecology of knowledge. The possible questions and the possible answers are determined by this history. Within a certain way of thinking there are internal criteria for true and false answers, for good and bad solutions; but only some come up for grabs at all. We should not be too amazed if someone informs us that the picture of the human mind in Minsky's fascinating book, like some other, rather similar detailed accounts of the human mind, could have come into being only when it did.

IAN HACKING

Ian Hacking teaches at the Institute for History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at the University of Toronto.

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Persian Nights
by Diane Johnson

(Knopf, 352 pp., \$17.95)

Diane Johnson specializes in an artful blend of high anxiety and deadpan humor. She tells stories that are both shocking and droll, filled with mordant observations about the disjunction between people's perceptions of themselves and their world and the unadulterated truth. In *Persian Nights*, as in *Lying Low* (1978), a novel about a former terrorist living under an assumed identity outside Sacramento, Johnson has written a social and political satire. But here she moves far beyond the confines of suburban California, where most of her novels are set, and drops her characters in Shiraz on the virtual eve of the Iranian revolution.

Six months ago Johnson's scenario might have appeared farfetched. In the wake of the revelations about the Reagan

administration's Iranian adventures, it seems almost tame. She portrays a group of Americans who comically stumble into a political morass, the depths of which they repeatedly underestimate and misjudge. Embodying a mixture of American bravado and naïveté, her characters are swept up in a social, religious, and political revolt that dwarfs their ambitions and concerns. *Persian Nights* contains no overt political message. Instead, the Islamic uprising is used both as an exotic backdrop for the story and as a dramatic device with which to parody the parochial traumas of a little band of Americans abroad.

In Johnson's fiction the sinister lurks just beneath the commonplace. As the persecuted heroine puts it in *The Shadow Knows* (1974): "Other people in the world seem to be masked figures wandering



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dreamily around who will for a flash pull away their masks, wink atrociously at you, grimace, then everyone is muffled up again wearing ordinary smiles." In *Persian Nights* the anticipation of this unmasking is no less unnerving, since the characters must contend with a strange and turbulent culture, as well as with the inherent strangeness and turbulence of the human psyche. The confrontation between Iranian fundamentalism and American optimism takes various startling forms as everyone seems to become infected by the mistrust that is seeping across the country: Iranians suspect various Americans of being CIA agents; Americans can't distinguish between Savak agents and rebels. Friends withhold confidences, and lovers are secretive and duplicitous.

ALL OF THIS is promising. Johnson's portrait of the Americans is sharply satirical. The context she has chosen for them is the international lecture circuit, which, as David Lodge showed in *Small World*, contains many possibilities for preposterousness. This time the group consists of doctors, most of them acquaintances from previous gatherings, invited to practice for several weeks at the medical school in Shiraz. There is a genial dermatologist who suffers from psoriasis (Dick Rothblatt, recently divorced); a young, radical-feminist gynecologist (Junie, Dick's lover); and a quixotic infectious disease specialist (Hugh Monroe). The protagonist is a fastidious, self-indulgent young wife and mother (Chloe Fowler). She is abandoned at the airport by her husband, Jeffrey, a thoracic surgeon, who suddenly finds he must attend to a professional emergency at home. He plans, disingenuously, to join her later. She plans, wholeheartedly, to consummate a love affair with Hugh Monroe that was initiated during their last encounter in California. She sees her trip as an opportunity for a delightful interlude away from her snappish husband, her children, and her household chores. Chloe observes the other Americans' surreptitious love affairs and crumbling marriages and the Iranians' fears about the menacing political climate with the same cheerful curiosity.

These visitors believe that they are tolerant, open-minded people, and they have no trouble imagining a more enlightened future for Iran—and for themselves. In fact, they are benignly patronizing neocolonialists. Safely ensconced in the medical compound, they at first re-

main untouched by the growing political unrest. Dick Rothblatt eagerly looks forward to his work at the hospital. "Here was a chance really to do things . . . a need surpassing the mere acne and drug reactions you got at home in America. Here huge horrible things swelled up on people. . . . Here you could die of impetigo." Hearing of strikes and machine-gun toting soldiers in other towns, Chloe,

like the other Americans, though regretting these intimations of bloodshed, viewed them with equanimity, even approval. They had the regular American belief that tyrants must and will eventually fall. They didn't even mind the occasional manifestations of anti-Americanism. They didn't take it personally, and they were all leaving anyway. Chloe hated the thought that she had only three weeks left.

Johnson shows, through stock comic conventions and characters, the collision between two insular cultures. At the same time, she apparently had a more complex novel in mind. She infuses the labyrinthine plot with considerable suspense and two mysteries, which are jointly solved in the final pages of the novel: Hugh engages in a highly secret political mission before joining his companions in Shiraz; and during a sight-seeing expedition, Chloe and her companions come across a badly injured man deep in a cave. When he dies, no one can vouch for his nationality, let alone his identity; the police decline to investigate, and the hospital refuses to take the body off their hands. Throughout it all, the novel builds steadily toward the climax at the ruins in Persepolis, where the tourists from Shiraz suddenly find their own lives threatened by American gunrunners and plunderers and Iranian rebels.

THE PROBLEM with *Persian Nights* is that Chloe, at first amusing as a so-lipsistic—and intermittently astute—inno-cent abroad, eventually becomes tedious and predictable. Johnson seems to have been torn between her intention to present Chloe as an appealingly flawed character and her enjoyment at mocking her. Meanwhile, the narrative, which promises to develop from a social comedy into a political drama, degenerates into an elaborate farce. Doubtless this was Johnson's intention: her characters, muddled when it comes to personal politics, reveal an extraordinary ineptitude when they discover the world of bombs and guns and ideological passion. But though Johnson is deft at satirizing privileged Americans, she is clumsy with the Irani-

ans. Because she never takes the novel much beyond Chloe's myopic perspective, the Iranian characters remain flimsy and half-formed. Their function is to provide comic relief, and to move the plot forward by robbing the heroine and her friends of a few cherished illusions.

The novel's two central Iranian figures, Abbas and Noosheen, are the Americans' counterparts—idealistic, impetuous, and foolhardy. Chloe has maintained a stubborn belief in the moral purity of her new friends: Abbas, a handsome, brooding young doctor trying to recover from the recent deaths of his wife and baby, and to reconcile his ambivalent feelings about his comfortable life (his brother is a rebel in exile in Paris); and Noosheen, a spirited student of Victorian poetry chained to an ancient, desiccated husband. Chloe is shocked to discover that they are as deceitful and decadent as she is. Convinced that Abbas is secretly in love with Noosheen, and determined to play matchmaker, Chloe goes to him to confide her worries about the girl, hoping he will open his heart; instead he tells Chloe, "But it's you I want," and they rush off to bed.

Chloe impulsively concocts a risky plan to help Noosheen leave her husband and flee the country, and then spends a few contrite days worrying about her meddling—only to learn that Noosheen has returned:

Now Chloe was feeling . . . that it was rather mercurial and unreliable of Noosheen to have come back so contentedly and quickly. She, Chloe, might have been condemned forever to a troubled conscience and a life of concern for someone who like the wind changed directions or lost interest, like a child.

What's worse, Noosheen has inexplicably joined the rebels' cause. The poetry of Matthew Arnold, she tells Chloe earnestly, contains striking parallels with the Iranian uprising. She is translating "Rugby Chapel" into Farsi, and plans to present it to her compatriots as an ancient Persian manuscript.

THE narrative's turning point is provided by Abbas's failed act of heroism at Persepolis, yet like Noosheen's abortive flight, his attempt to save his country's treasures from the plunderers is contrived and implausible. Johnson herself seems unconvinced by the tragedy of his death; she simply needed a culminating event that would break up the colony and send them home with mild regrets about their moral indolence. The

prose too becomes sloppy as Johnson wraps up the drama and delivers a few final barbs to her prattling protagonist:

"It's just terrible," cried Chloe, the thought popping into her reluctant mind that it was deceitful of Abbas to sleep with her when he was in love with Junie. . . . How she detested herself for these frivolous thoughts. Why was she cursed with a nature that could not grasp the tragic and went on with egotism and vanity in spite of her conscious wishes?

And, later on:

Someone dead whom she had loved—had she? Whom did she love? Everyone? Anyone? How to keep thinking of herself, the real object of such questions? It was of love, large, universal, she ought to think, and of large, universal death.

Persian Nights is an odd combination of ambition and laziness. For all the blending of genres, the buildup of suspense, the well-pitched dialogue, and the facile wit, Johnson fails to fulfill the expectations she raises. Foremost an entertainer and a cynic, she rarely allows her characters a fair measure of power over their lives—just what they always think they're achieving. In her light California comedies, where people idly fiddle with the fates of others, this restriction works quite well. In *Persian Nights*, where the stage and the stakes are considerably larger, the effect is not one of sardonic sophistication, but of painstaking triviality.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

THE WRITE STUFF

The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society by Harvey J. Graff

(Indiana University Press, 493 pp., \$57.50)

Illiteracy: A National Dilemma by David Harman

(Cambridge, 113 pp., \$11.95)

In 1985 the Northeast Midwest Institute, a nonprofit research and education group, reported that 60 million Americans cannot read the front page of a newspaper. A year later, the Bureau of the Census gave a basic literacy test to 3,400 Americans over the age of 20 and concluded that 17 million to 21 million adults cannot read and that one in five has reading skills that render them unable to function effectively in society. But at the beginning of this decade, census figures had been widely interpreted as showing a 99 percent rate of literacy in the United States. What happened?

One reason for the change in perceptions of literacy is the social-crisis mentality of the 1980s. No education expert disputes the fact that there have always been a substantial number of people who, despite the existence of universal compulsory education in this country, have gone through the public school system without learning adequate reading skills. It is only in the past several

years that some writers on literacy, notably Jonathan Kozol, have helped illiteracy assume a place alongside drug abuse and teenage pregnancy in the pantheon of America's social disasters. The reason is obvious: fighting illiteracy—whatever the magnitude of the problem—requires government money, and the best way to pry funds from the Reagan administration is to cry crisis.

This Kozol did in *Illiterate America*, in which he wholeheartedly embraced the theory that one-third of America's adults are illiterate. In the absence of a "national campaign sponsored by dynamic government leaders"—his model is Cuba—Kozol called for something like an anti-illiteracy revolution: "grass-roots struggle fired from the bottom up and governed in ways that do not cause dependence, foster impotence, or reinforce existing feelings of futility." Kozol's prose is affecting. But his plan to mobilize illiterate Americans and provide government funding for literacy pro-

grams is an unnecessary reinvention of the wheel. America already has one of the best public education systems in the world; it is hard to agree with him that its existing schools are not the place to wage the war against illiteracy.

Has public education really failed on a monumental scale in its most basic mission? In *The Legacies of Literacy*, Harvey Graff writes: "That a 'crisis-level' decline [in literacy] has taken place . . . has not been proved. A problem, not a 'crisis,' is an accurate description of the findings of test scores." Graff's mere mention of test scores, and his implication that their results are subject to varying interpretations, returns the problem of illiteracy, so inflated by Kozol, to a more realistic scale. The actual number of illiterate Americans is impossible to determine, because there is still no single definition of literacy among educators, and therefore no single test for determining who is indeed illiterate. Every expert has his preferred numbers. The numbers used by Kozol, which include all total, functional, and marginal non-readers, are almost certainly the product of overly assiduous testing. It is likely that the real number of illiterates whose "ability to function effectively in society" (as the test puts it) is seriously impaired by their illiteracy is much lower—perhaps only one-third of the 60 million cited by Kozol. But in a society that stresses education as we do, illiteracy (even on a less-than-epidemic scale) represents a failure that can and should be corrected.

The best way to tackle the problem, in the absence of hard numbers or really radical rethinking, is to build on what we have. We know we have a good public school system, grounded in sound ideas about education, that should be adequate to teach reading to all but the "irreducible minimum" described by Graff. What we appear to be missing is a sober, collective sense of literacy as a value, rather than as a trendy social problem that can be solved by a grandstand play. Building such a consensus is the idea behind David Harman's new book. A professor of education at Teachers College and a long-time literacy advocate, Harman agrees with Kozol that illiteracy is "deeply rooted in both culture and social dynamic," but he resists attaching blame to either one.

The responsibility for the literacy problem, says Harman, is "not with the schools, or with the teachers, or with the methods of teaching, or with the

training of literacy volunteers, or with the willingness of adult illiterates to seek help. The problem is with the nature of literacy itself." As Harman sees it, America is counterproductively obsessed with literacy as a technical skill, as something that can be taught scientifically. That approach, Harman suggests, gave rise to the panacea of massive private education programs geared to teach any illiterate adult how to read, an approach Harman feels has failed because "its logical underpinnings were flawed. Literacy is not just a technical ability: it is a consciousness that must be internalized before an individual can be available for instruction."

The description of literacy as "a consciousness that must be internalized" is enough to send even concerned citizens scurrying to bury their heads in the sand. The task it implies is simply too daunting. Harman's strength is his practicality. He proposes that educators and literacy activists concern themselves first with understanding the social and personal factors that contribute to an indi-

vidual's lack of a value-based foundation on which to establish literacy. With this done, it is possible to determine "the availability" of a person for learning. Otherwise, "The search for the 'perfect' instructional approach is futile. The focus in adult education has to be on *what* to teach—which is determined by areas of availability in the learners—and not on *how* to teach."

Kozol proposes a new educational net so finely woven that virtually nobody could slip through. Harman says the net already exists as a combination of schools, literacy programs, and public concern. The question is how to throw it so that it catches the maximum number of people. His answer is: availability. Clearly, Harman's availability theory is most applicable to adults whose range is proscribed by years of habit. Children are more available for learning than adults, Harman admits, but this does not exclude adults from the availability equation. Parents can demonstrate their seriousness about education by simply packing their children off to school. But if they are illiterate themselves, or if they don't support what is taught there, they are failing to inculcate literacy as a "value," the one requirement that Harman insists is essential to real, permanent literacy. Many, perhaps even most, illiterate adults were taught how to read at some point in their lives. What their education and social surroundings almost certainly lacked was a sense of literacy as a value.

Still, the practical truth is that many illiterate parents will not be reached in time for it to make any difference to the next generation. For the children of illiterate parents, the sense of literacy as a value will have to come from society in general and from school specifically. Secretary of Education William Bennett has said very little on the subject of illiteracy, but during a 1985 Senate hearing on literacy he made it clear that his department's emphasis would be on prevention—essentially, on stressing reading early in elementary school. This is a good idea, but it confuses encouraging people to read with teaching them to be literate. Bennett's "back-to-basics" approach falls short of the standards of almost every literacy expert, including Graff, who contends that "a mythical return to a past that never was" is inappropriate as a solution. As is often the case, Bennett's own views diverge from those of his department. Its 1986 report, "What Works: Research about Teaching

and Learning," insisted that parents should be encouraged to read to their children and to recognize their role as "first and most influential" teachers. But, as Harman notes, "The report neglects to discuss how non-reading adults or illiterate adults can offer this help to their children." Unfortunately, so does Harman.

NOWHERE in *Illiteracy* does Harman suggest that determining availability in illiterate adults is easy, and he admits to not having a formula for doing so. Instead, he analyzes five actual literacy programs in an attempt to determine what made some more successful than others. Out of the five, there is only one clear success: a group of 42 would-be exterminators whose degree of literacy varied but was, in all cases, insufficient to pass New York certification exams. Their course, sponsored by their union, was taught by six senior exterminators who used the actual exterminator's manual as a text. There was no attrition (in fact, the course was extended so group members could achieve higher professional levels), and all 42 passed the exam.

It is a simple success story, and Harman analyzes it simply. The program worked because it spoke to the actual career goals of the participants, because the literacy component was relegated to a non-threatening role, and because peer teaching created a comfortable atmosphere. Most important to Harman's thesis, though, is the fact that 42 men who had clearly never valued literacy suddenly found common ground on which to value it. As Harman explains, "The men's own desire for change was the focal point of the course. It was not marginal to their lives but central." Unfortunately, the very particular nature of the exterminators' program precludes the drawing of broader conclusions, and in a sense Harman's book ends here. Having made the point convincingly that literacy is a value, and that literacy programs must be flexible and tailored to the changing needs of particular groups of people if they are to be successful, Harman can do little more than plead for the reader's, and society's, understanding.

The irony of American education in the 1980s is not that our schools—among the best-funded in the world—have failed to eliminate illiteracy, but that our long history of fine education has not taught us what appears obvious in Harman's book: that, despite close links, there is a difference between education and literacy. The damage to the links,



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while it may be profound in the inner-city schools where Kozol did much of his research, cannot fully account for the existence of illiteracy in the United States. Nor can the view that failure to take advantage of America's educational opportunities, to make oneself literate, is the individual's own failure. Illiteracy is the result of a whole society's failure to place a high enough significance on reading. Until American society sincerely finds value in the literacy of as many people as are mentally capable of being literate, this will remain a national dilemma.

ADAM PAUL WEISMAN

Adam Paul Weisman is a former TNR reporter-researcher.

TRB, from page 4

the perpetrators. The justices take a tougher line against quotas in layoffs than they do against quotas in hiring, as if there's an actual moral difference between a white male who is laid off because of his race and a white male—probably unknown, but just as real—who doesn't get the job in the first place.

Finally, the justices emphasize in cases like this one, where there is no proof of past discrimination, that the affirmative action is "voluntary"—as if it were voluntary for the actual victims, and as if the employers weren't looking over their shoulders at potential lawsuits by the government and minority employees.

Scalia, in his dissent, puts special emphasis on this last anomaly. "The practical effect of our holding," he writes, is to force employers "to engage in intentional discrimination on the basis of race or sex" by leaving the ordinary mechanisms of civil rights law intact while eliminating the fear of reverse discrimination suits.

But what does Scalia want? Taken at his word, he seems to want employers trapped in a nightmare where their behavior is completely hemmed in on both sides by the government—by fear of traditional civil rights lawsuits if there are unexplained anomalies in the racial composition of their work force, and by fear of reverse discrimination lawsuits if they do anything about it without waiting to be sued first. Perhaps there is a narrow safe passage between this Scylla and this Charybdis. But it is ironic that a conservative legal intellectual would want to

leave private citizens with so little freedom from government-imposed constraints on their behavior. The reason most corporations have greeted the *Johnson* decision with relief is not, as Scalia suggests, that top executives have no sympathy with the working-class victims of affirmative action, but that they do not relish being caught in a legal vise.

In fact, Scalia and other conservatives are being disingenuous when they say they want a "colorblind" standard under which today's civil rights protections are equally available to blacks and whites, men and women. Their vision of a "colorblind" civil rights regime could only function in the real world if protections now available to minorities and women were drastically curtailed. Not merely affirmative action, but the standards of proof of discrimination and the availability of race-conscious remedies when discrimination is found. They want less civil rights, not more civil rights, and should stop pretending otherwise.

CORRESPONDENCE, from page 6

state school system and should be dealt with in the home. The problem is that many teen pregnancies today occur because there is inadequate communication within families about the dangers of unprotected sexual activity. Turning to these families to solve the problem would merely be asking the problem's origin to find its own cure. Such an attitude is further evidence of the administration's attitude that if there's a problem, they needn't worry; the private sector will take care of it.

JOHN S. WILLIS
New Haven, Connecticut

LAUGHING HEADS

To the editors:

As a David Byrne fan and member of the television culture-consumer society, I think it's great that Texans love *True Stories* ("Start Making Sense" by Crockier Coulson, March 23). It shows a wonderfully human ability to laugh at life and the measures we'll take to be happy. And that laughter is not "dead laughter" simply because it lacks "malice" and "recognition." I was always told that malicious laughter was bad and if a joke was obvious it was no good.

As to whether Coulson understands

the Talking Heads and/or David Byrne (early, modern, or postmodern), I really couldn't say because I didn't understand a whit of what he had to say. Lighten up! And remember, the video the lazy woman watches from her bed is not "Wild Life" but "Love for Sale." Every character in this lighthearted movie gets to sing "Wild Life," and there's a meaning there that Mr. Coulson just can't see. *True Stories* is not a monumental work of postmodernist-avant-garde-attitude. It's a fairly successful celebration of how silly—and wild—all our lives are.

ROBERT ENGLISH
New York, New York

To the editors:

The postmodernist tendency, as exemplified by David Byrne, is merely high-brow cynicism that has no place in rock music. It certainly appeals to those who would belittle the emotionality of someone like Bruce Springsteen or, God forbid, Elvis Presley and the Beatles. TNR, however, shows its true colors by panning a classic rock 'n' roll band, the Ramones. You'd learn a lot more from analyzing "the boorish adolescence of the Ramone clan" than from any analysis of the unbelievably shallow Byrne.

TIM UBL
Wadsworth, Illinois

GEOGRAPHY REVIEW

To the editors:

Would you consider submitting your reviewers of books that are set in foreign countries to a preliminary test in basic geography—at least when the country is an important part of the subject of the work? A few issues ago you had Geoffrey Wheatcroft's review of Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* talking about "Sidney," a city that does not exist. Now James Wolcott, discussing Kingsley Amis's *The Old Devils*, reveals that he believes South Wales to be somewhere well to the north of London ("Do Not Go Sober," March 30). How can one take seriously a reviewer's claim to be familiar with the cultural terrain in question (Wheatcroft confidently characterizes "Australianness" in a sentence, and Wolcott writes knowingly of "the ruddy flavor of Wales") when he does not even know how to spell the name of its major city or where the place is?

OWEN HARRIES
Washington, D.C.
(formerly of Wales and Sydney)

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Bureaucrats' Lament

THE TURKS AND the Greeks have backed away from war just as some meditations by Turkey's former prime minister Bülent Ecevit on Greek-Turkish affinities are being published here in Washington. In a poem, Ecevit offers peaceful reflections on what the two peoples share. Brazil's president, José Sarney, who recently suspended his nation's interest payments to commercial banks, will also be published here shortly. His poem is a contemplation of bicycles and bicycle riding. Both works—along with poems by Senegal's former president Léopold Sédor Senghor and by Bangladesh's president, Hussain Muhamad Ershad—will appear in the next issue of *World's Word*, a free quarterly otherwise filled with the polyglot poetry of employees of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and edited by one of the Bank's senior counsels, Pedro Correia da Silva.

World's Word (not an official Bank publication) is a remarkable example of an elusive phenomenon: Washington culture. Much of the work comes across as a kind of aesthetic graffiti on the bureaucracy's walls. Its contents arise directly from an experience of bureaucracy peculiar to Washington. There are all kinds of writing and graphic art in the quarterly, but much of *World's Word* is a surprising *cri de coeur*. The poets of the World Bank are rather like Randall Jarrell's "Woman at the Washington Zoo" (1960) come to life. Jarrell's is surely the best-known poem about modern Washington, and it too is about a bureaucrat. She visits the zoo in "the dull null/Navy I wear to work, and wear from work, and so/To my bed, so to my grave, with no/Complaints, no comment: neither from my chief,/The Deputy Chief Assistant, nor his chief—/Only I complain . . ."

THOUGH *World's Word* features its share of satirical ditties about Bank life, what stands out is the somberness of the poetry. (Washington's bureaucrats get a lot of bad press, especially its international bureaucrats. But the fact is that thousands of them are foreigners who have never accustomed themselves to U.S. culture, yet who have been away from their own cultures for so long that they have lost touch with them.) The pre-

dominant imagery is of bound yearning, of "the distant rose a prisoner smells through the small window of his cell," or of a rose "which dies because it was not watered," or of a poet who "counts the cigarettes I've crushed in my ashtray/to measure my solitude." John Pauker, a USIA employee, wrote a little poem a decade ago that went, "The ills of a poet are dull and routine affairs/Neglect, misunderstanding./To liven his life, let's kick the poet downstairs/And hear his head crunch on the landing." The poets of the Bank, dactyls in their in-boxes, *abcb* rhymes in their A-Z files, sonnets in their PCs, have been kicking back.

THE ACADEMY OF Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, whose annual Oscar bashes have been appropriately termed a Kiwanis Club luncheon gone stark raving mad, wants to kick its documentary honorees out of the spotlight, as it did with its engineering Oscars years ago. The idea is that nobody cares about documentaries, and that they just slow down an impossibly overlong TV event. Unhappily, the academy's probably right. Documentary has virtually disappeared as a form. It is a rare theatrical documentary that can get enough bookings to pay its production costs, never mind making a profit. As for the networks, which not only once featured the proud "CBS Reports"-style documentaries but even pioneered cinema *verité* in the United States, forget it. There are no longer any network documentaries to speak of.

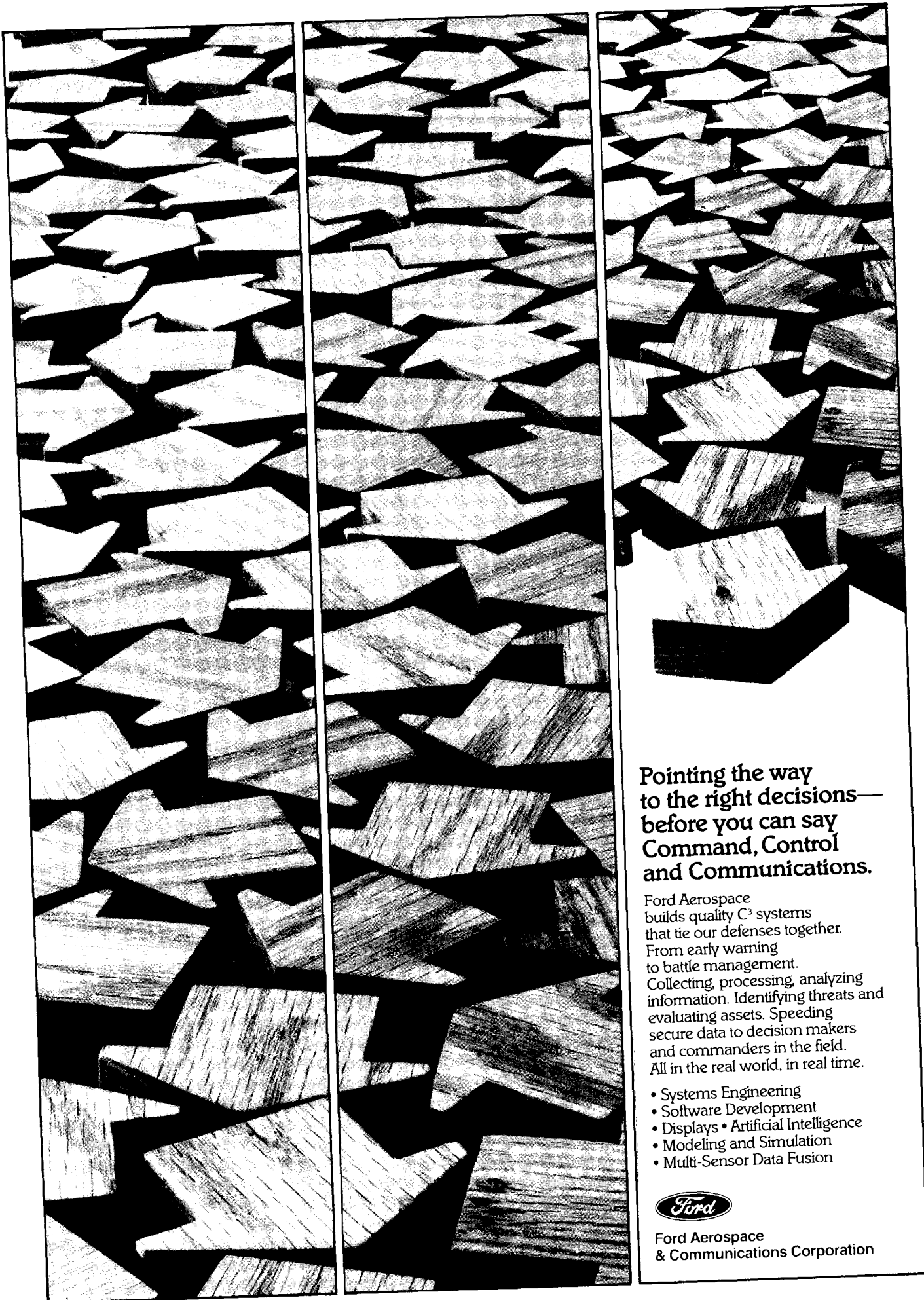
THAT LEAVES PBS. Or does it? PBS schedules lots of non-fiction programming, but take away the bird-and-bunny nature shows, and what's left? Mostly lifetime learning courses on enormous subjects: The Ascent of Western Man, The Day the Universe Changed, Cosmos, etc. There's nothing wrong with these shows; many of them are well produced. But this is only one kind of non-fiction film, the kind you can later make a book out of. Freestanding, full-length documentaries that reflect a filmmaker's point of view on something, whether an issue, a specific event, a person, or even something entirely whimsical, are the 78-rpm records of the visual age. Frederick Wiseman's films are an

exception. Given the high hopes that documentary's pioneers had for the form as a social force, this is a shame and a loss. It isn't that nobody's making these films, but that nobody's showing them. Catching an audience for a documentary seems as outdated as Nanook catching his walrus with a harpoon.

YOU MAY HAVE MISSED a recent series of demonstrations in front of the *contras*' Washington headquarters opposing further U.S. funding. The protesters had two sets of grievances. One dealt with the *contras* themselves; the demonstrating groups didn't like them. The other dealt with the District of Columbia. According to the protesters, D.C. taxpayers' funds now going to the *contras* should be spent instead on local problems: the homeless, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, and so forth. This is extremely rare, if not unheard of. Washington may be the most politically powerful capital in the West, but it features one of the least politicized populations. Though the city was laid out with defense against local uprisings in mind (L'Enfant had the contentious Parisians as a fresh example), early on the locals adopted a nonchalance toward national affairs that has rarely been interrupted.

THERE ARE MANY reasons for this, not all of them having to do with Washington's own urban culture. True, the city's bohemia—including its campus life—where dissent might be expected to simmer, has traditionally been thin. Also, the city has always been heavily dependent on the feds. It doesn't make for a contentious mix. On the other hand, Washingtonians are uniquely powerless, underrepresented in the Electoral College (to which they gained admission only in 1964), and without even one vote on Capitol Hill. Shut out of the national system, they have rarely addressed themselves—as Washingtonians—to national issues. Pennsylvania Avenue, to many locals, is just a permanent, tourist-clogged traffic jam to be avoided; Capitol Hill just a detour on the way to the stadium. Every generation of Washingtonians since 1801 has tried to change this. They're still trying.

C. P. F.



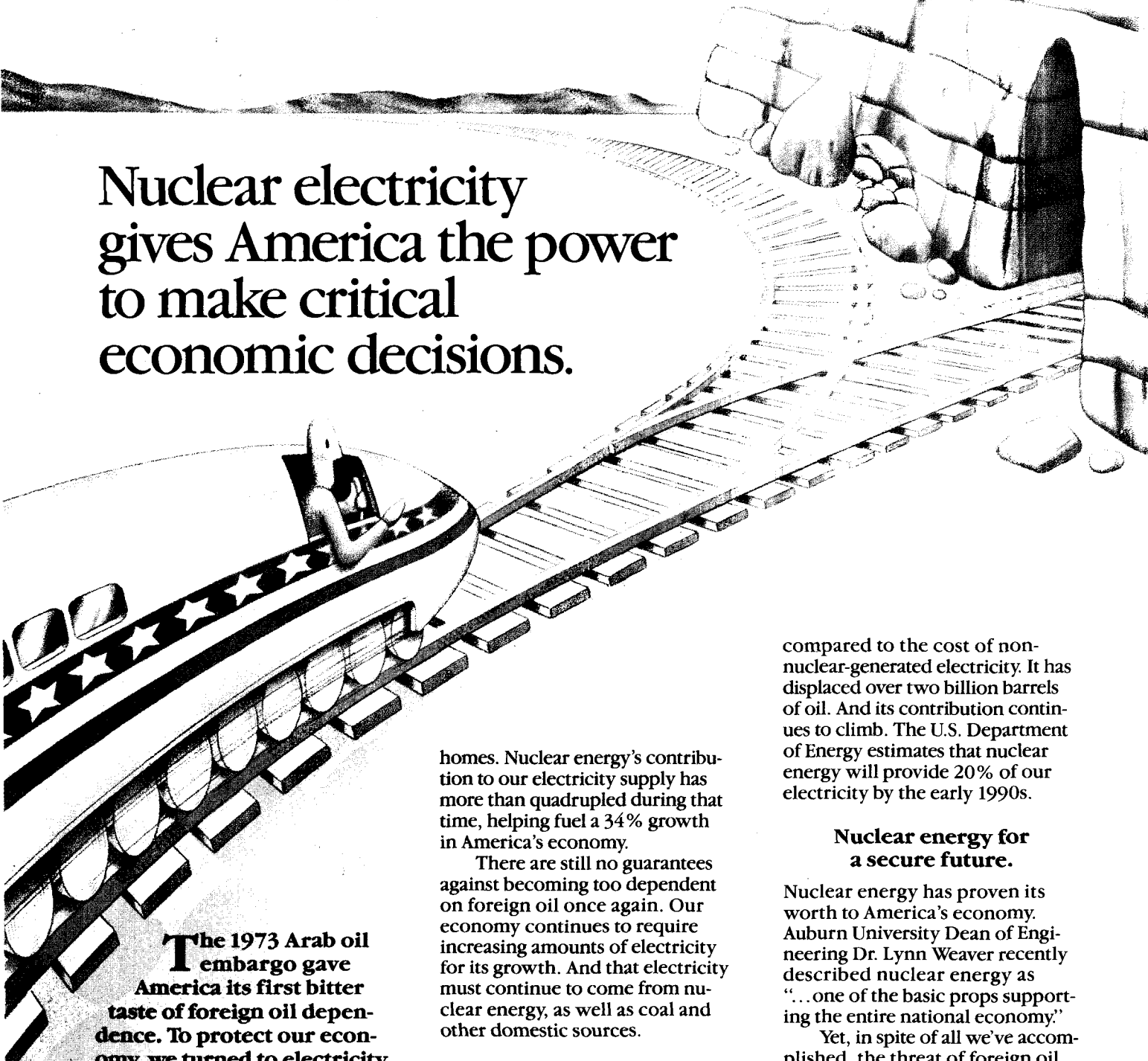
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